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**SEVEN MONTHS
WITH MAHATMA GANDHI**

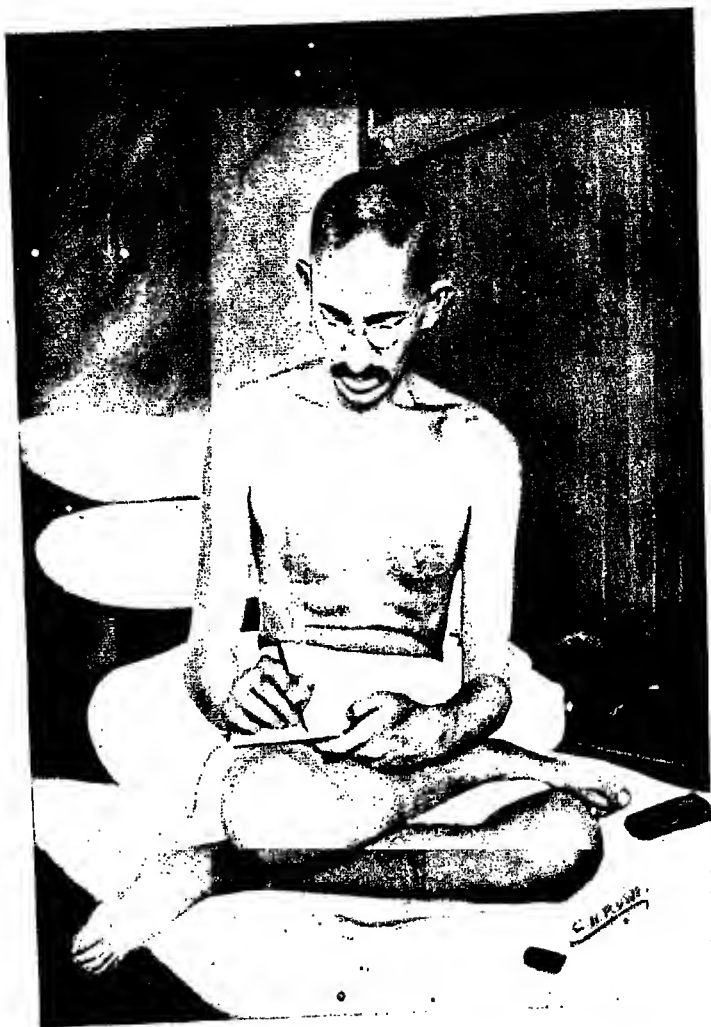
SEVEN MONTHS
WITH
MAHATMA GANDHI
BEING AN INSIDE VIEW OF THE
NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT,
(1921-22.)

BY
KRISHNADAS

Vol. II

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Mahatma Gandhi

PREFACE

The story of seven months of the non-co-operation movement which is the subject-matter of the present book has been brought to a close in this volume. The present volume deals with incidents of the stirring days of December, 1921 and January to March, 1922 when the agitation among the masses of India reached a point of growth unprecedented in the political history of India. This period, which closes with the arrest and imprisonment of Mahatma Gandhi, is the crowning period of the non-co-operation movement, and is marked by some clearly defined phases. It showed, for instance, an India-wide movement of civil disobedience against the promulgation by the Government of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act resulting in the arrest and imprisonment of almost all the well-known non-co-operation leaders of India with about twenty-five thousand followers. Secondly, it was during this period that the question of a Round Table Conference with Government was mooted, and negotiations were set on foot which ultimately broke down under circumstances which have been described in detail in this volume. Thirdly, it showed the preparations for aggressive mass civil disobedience at Bardoli under Mahatma Gandhi's direct supervision and guidance, which, however, had to be suspended on account of an outbreak of mob violence at Chauri Chaura. These three phases of the movement have been treated in the first six parts of this volume. The seventh part gives a general review of the main purpose of the story, and an attempt has been made therein to clarify the political situations as they unfolded themselves in India, one after another, during the period intervening between the last part of the year 1921, and the first part of 1922. The action and reaction of the activities of the non-co-operating Congress on the one hand, and those of British Imperialism on the other, have been brought out in strong relief in this review. Lastly, the eighth part, which has been styled

“Prospec. and Retrospect” gives a general survey of the political situation in India as it has developed since the programme and policy of Mahatma Gandhi suffered an eclipse in the counsels of the Indian intelligentsia in favour of a programme of Council politics, and all that followed from it.

Ever since the suspension of mass civil disobedience at Bardoli in February 1922, two questions have been strongly agitating the thinking public of India. Was Mahatma Gandhi right in not taking advantage of the opportunity of a Round Table Conference with Government, when such opportunity presented itself in December, 1921 through the activities of that veteran Indian politician, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya? Secondly, was he right in calling a sudden halt to all activities of an aggressive kind after the outbreak of violence at Chauri Chaura? It is claimed on behalf of this book that a systematic attempt has been made, perhaps for the first time, to study these questions elaborately, and in relation to facts and materials, some of which have not been hitherto available to the public. This will, it is hoped, enable the reader to arrive at a correct estimate of the quality of Mahatma Gandhi's political leadership as expressed through his handling of the situations stated above.

Gandhi Kutir
Dighwara
(Behar)
December, 1928. }

KRISHNADAS

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INTRODUCTION.

The story of my "Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi" was but half completed in volume First of this book. In it I tried to portray the first two phases of the Non-Co-operation movement. The end of the second phase synchronised with a most interesting, if a most critical, chapter in the history of Non-Co-operation as well as of Mahatma Gandhi's life. The Bombay politico-communal riots had broken out on the very day of the landing of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales in Bombay (November 17, 1921), and continued for five long days. It was brought under control and peace was restored on terms of inter-communal amity. No aid of the military was requisitioned, or sought for, by the leaders. Peace was re-established solely by the efforts of the leaders of all the different communities and political parties acting in unison. This was a crowning achievement of self-effort on the part of the people which cheered Mahatmaji's heart and made him listen to the importunities of the communal leaders who requested him to break his vow of a fast of indefinite length which he had imposed on himself. The news that Mahatmaji had resolved on a vow to fast away his life until and unless a real, fraternal peace was established had spread like wildfire among the rank and file of the warring communities, and even amongst the hooligans concerned, and was responsible for the speedy restoration of peace on terms which Mahatmaji had laid down for himself. When these terms had been fulfilled and peace re-established, the leading representatives of all the different religious communities and political parties,—Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis, Christians, Co-operators and Non-Cooperators—met on the sixth day following on the outbreak at a friendly gathering and joined in a Peace-Breakfast. At that fraternal gathering Mahatmaji broke his fast. The story of the previous volume had ended at this point.

In the present volume I resume the thread of my story of "Seven Months" and bring it down to its close with the

arrest of Mahatma Gandhi at his Sabarmati Ashram on the night of March 10, 1922, and his conviction and imprisonment on March 18, 1922. It is a story of unprecedented interest from the point of view of the contemporary historian, and of undying inspiration for the ardent patriot not afraid to tread the path of self-suffering and sacrifice in the pursuit of Swaraj. Fortunately or unfortunately, western methods and ideals of achieving political emancipation has captured the minds and imaginations of the Indian intelligentsia. It is therefore that the method of self-suffering and sacrifice promulgated by Mahatma Gandhi as the only effective method available to India wherewith to regain her lost foothold among the nations and peoples of the world does not find an easy entrance into their hearts. If the classes had been less sophisticated, it would have been easier for them to grasp the weapon forged by Mahatmaji. As it is, the Indian problem is not beset with so much difficulty in the case of the unsophisticated masses of India. Given competent guidance, they could be more easily organised for a non-violent warfare with autocracy. The very successful campaign of Satyagraha which the unlettered agriculturists* of the Bardoli Taluka of the Bombay Presidency only recently waged against an autocratic Provincial Government backed up by an equally autocratic Home Government, when every other constitutional method had failed, is a perpetual reminder of the potentialities of a non-violent mass movement under competent non-violent leadership. For with the masses everything depends upon such leadership.

The truth of the matter, as it seems to me, is that the Indian intelligentsia have not yet been thoroughly awakened to a consciousness of one fundamental feature of the Indian situation. And that is that the political problem of India, as of every other dependent country ruled and dominated by Sovereign Imperial States, is of a class apart. The methods of achieving political emancipation that would have done duty before the days of highly organised and highly equipped States holding Imperial dependencies and possessions in their grasp are no longer applicable, or are

* Numbering less than a lakh.

daily getting out of date. The mere formation of public opinion among the highly educated or even among the semi-educated sections of the community, although essential under all circumstances, would be but a preliminary step, but would not be enough by itself to wrest real power from Imperial autocracy. Constitutionalism, as such, pitted against such autocracy is but a broken reed. In a National State, Constitutionalism is a potent force, for the State is but the creation of the People's Will, and an instrument to give effect to that will. A new method of political attack is therefore demanded by the altered circumstances of the case. For Imperialism has ushered into the world a new order of politics, and political efforts have to be adjusted to the new order. The fact of the matter is that weak, unorganized, ill-equipped, exploited peoples of the world, whatever their culture, whatever their age and tradition, have hardly any chance against organized Sovereign Imperialist States as political masters, if they continue to pursue the old beaten track. Indian politics must undergo a new orientation.

The study of Imperialism has but begun with the birth of the twentieth century, and the meaning and implications of Imperialism as a novel, yet compelling, phenomenon of world politics are just beginning to be envisaged. The old political order of exclusively National States owning no possessions which formed the pabulum on which orthodox political Gurus were fed, and which gave birth to orthodox Political Science which still holds us in our grip—that old order has vanished* or is vanishing. A new portent has arisen on the world's political horizon. That portent is Imperialism. Imperialism has parcelled out the world for its own use and enjoyment. It is also holding out baits to keep their possessions in good humour. Imperial possessions and dependencies have to be kept under control and in tutelage by Sovereign National States. The baits are political "gifts"* in the shape of "constitutions" for subject peoples, so framed that Imperialism may take cover under it, and maintain intact its essential sovereignty.

* For 'gifts' *vide* H. R. H. the Duke of Connaught's inaugural address to the Legislative Assembly of India on February 9, 1921.

The methods of Imperialism therefore require a closer scrutiny. For the armed organization with which Imperialism is perpetually equipped as with a shining armour, and which is held *in terrorem* in fact, though not with directness or with the ostentatious display dear to the hearts of the older holders of despotic Empires, is not the only source of danger to which dependent Imperial possessions are exposed. The danger for them is that it is not so openly exposed. If, indeed, Imperial masters had behaved like the holders of the older Empires, it could not hide its ugly face before the governed peoples, and there would have been no chance of their being recognized or accepted as beneficent forces or influences providentially arranged to lift the peoples out of their fallen condition. The benignant aspect is sought to be preserved to the very last, but the mask has to be thrown off at last. For repression has to rear its ugly head when every other method of conciliation has failed, and then it falls down on the victim with a ruthlessness akin to frightfulness. Even then, Imperialism would so stage-manage the affair that "frightfulness" would seek to put on a benignant face, and assume the garb of "duty," a duty inevitable under the circumstances, although painful. Thus, invoked in the sacred name of Law and Order "frightfulness" changes its colour, and be not all frightfulness. Imperialism knows how to put on the mask. And so the victim of Imperialism would be found guilty of intimidation or coercion of law-abiding subjects of the Imperial Crown to whom protection must be extended by the Imperialist Administration, if the whole fabric of civilized government must not come down with a crash. To act otherwise would be like abdicating one of the primary functions of Government.

Or, again, if there is any deliberate disobedience of an unjust Imperial Law by a number of individual offenders fighting for conscience' sake against the law, and if each and every individual of the group in question stands prepared to bear the brunt of the legal punishment involved, Imperialism would say,—fight it out "constitutionally," whatever that might mean; make reasoned appeals to the agents of the Imperial Government in India; enter reasoned protests against the unjust law; seek the help of non-official

members of the Legislative Councils ; or, in the last resort, get some members of the Imperial Parliament to interpellate the Secretary or the Under-Secretary of State for India. That is all that you are permitted to do under the constitution, whatever the result. But do not disobey the unjust law, not even for your conscience' sake, not even if by so doing you help to remedy an admitted wrong, nor even if by so doing you seek to organize popular opinion against it. For such disobedience, even if the offender willingly submits to the legal punishment, is fraught with danger to the Imperialist Government. For the Constitution has it that you do not belong to a National State ; and you cannot pit yourself against the armed power of Imperialism. Your fight with the Imperialist Government can only be conducted with the permission or consent of the Government, and the limits are laid down by the constitution devised for your special behoof. Therefore it is not enough for that Government to punish the individual offender individually. Even if peaceful, disobedience of laws, however unjust, however they might trample upon the elementary rights of the people, if it is on any organized scale, is in the eyes of Imperialism a form of incipient revolt, an act of rebellion against the very authority of the King-Emperor. It is not an offence to be merely punished in the ordinary way by setting in motion the machinery of ordinary legal procedure. It cuts at the root and source of all authority. And although such disobedience of unmoral or unjust laws may not be necessary in the case of otherwise law-abiding citizens in a National Self-governing State, for there the law-making power is in the hands of the people. Imperialist authority has as much claim to be respected as any authority in a Self-governing National State. Imperialism, therefore, would construe the organized disobedience of Imperial laws as a challenge to Imperialist authorities, and a challenge also to the perpetuation of Imperial supremacy over subject peoples. Thus in 1921 when the movement of non-violent non-co-operation with Imperialism in India showed signs of growing power, the then Secretary of State for India, the late Mr. E. S. Montagu, felt bound to remind India of the status which she held in the Imperial scheme :—"If the existence of our Empire

were challenged, the discharge of responsibilities of the British Government to India prevented, and demands were made in the very mistaken belief that we contemplated retreat from India, then India would not challenge with success the most determined people in the world, who once again would answer with all the vigour and determination at its command."

* Thus the danger to dependent states from Imperialism is not always open and unabashed, although it knows how to assert itself, and when to assert itself. But there is a subtler danger still. It is when Imperialism seeks to insinuate itself into the favour of its unsuspecting victims and would poison the whole body politic. As already stated, advanced Imperialism no longer professes to govern as of old by constant threats of punishment, or by an ostentatious display of military prowess. The mailed fist is always there, but it is not in evidence. Advanced Imperialism is becoming increasingly chary. Another stage is rapidly arriving in Imperial governance. The arrival of the stage is a slow process, but it is an insidious process. It aims at capturing the minds and hearts of subject peoples, without, however, letting go, or even loosening its essential grip, the grip of Imperial sovereignty. It is the stage when subject peoples, while still remaining politically dependent in all essential or vital matters, would be made to feel and believe that the stage of political tutelage was rapidly passing away. It is the stage of "free gifts" of so-called "constitutions" from the Sovereign Imperial Power, the object being to reconcile the progressive spirits among the subject peoples to a prolongation of the period of subordination and tutelage. The danger here is a real danger, and it lies in this further reaction on the minds of the political classes. When the mailed fist was in evidence, there was no fear of reaction in favour of Imperialistic governance. But here the danger lies in a spirit of self-complacency, of self-satisfaction. The ardent protagonists of Swaraj would be continually led to think and believe that they were gradually approximating to the goal of political equality with their Sovereign Imperial Master, and that Imperialism was about to let go its hold over them.

Mahatma Gandhi's method of political warfare steers

itself wholly free from the pitfalls and snares that are likely to overtake and overwhelm those that have not thoroughly grasped the methods and devices of up-to-date Imperialism. As I have pointed out already, the older methods of political strategy to gain political emancipation were applicable to an older period of world politics. Nevertheless those methods are still being pursued in India as "politics" proper, although they no longer hold good, or are fast getting obsolete. The fact is that our present-day political leaders, trained as they have been more or less in the methods of the older school of politics, have their eyes turned towards the old order of political warfare. And necessarily they find themselves more or less confused and bewildered in having to cope with the newer methods of politics forged by the trained experts of Imperialistic science. Or, more accurately speaking, our leaders belong exclusively neither to the old order of National politics nor to the new order of Imperial politics. They are passing through a stage of political transition. Yet this stage of political transition will have to end; and if it is not ended soon, the moral dangers and pitfalls referred to above will continue and may even overwhelm, if the period of transition have to be sufficiently prolonged. For Imperialism is struggling hard, and will continue to struggle hard, to discover ways and means whereby to keep its *moral* hold on the subject peoples whom it dominates. Imperialism is afraid of losing that hold, although its shining armour may remain ever so shining. It feels that with the lapse of time it will have continually to justify that domination before the bar of world opinion. And secondly it has come to realize that it cannot perpetually go on rattling its sabre before the faces of the subject peoples concerned, especially in view of a rapid transformation of world factors and world politics. Even dependent peoples may have their uses in enabling Imperialism to stand on its feet as against competing forces, or combination of forces. Therefore Imperialism is becoming increasingly anxious to forge a moral weapon of its own so that the subject people may still continue to follow its political lead and may also be of political use in times of world emergencies. That moral weapon is the Imperial device of so-called "constitutions" of various types and

patterns which no National State would care to look at. They are invented for the special behoof of subject peoples, under differing conditions of political dependence to Imperial Sovereignty. They are so framed and adapted that they might just reconcile them to their state of subordination, and give them hope and assurance that better things are in store, if only the Imperial lead is accepted and followed. Then comes the stage of quiet submission or of co-operation with the Imperial masters in the working out of their policy. The problem then before Imperialism is how to continue, as the days pass, to give the lead to subject peoples, and to continue in their position as political leaders of those whom they govern. The glory and the essence of Mahatma Gandhi's political method is that he has laid before Imperially-governed peoples an independent method of achieving their political emancipation, which necessarily does away with the lead of Imperial Sovereign States in the matter of their political evolution.

So long as this Imperial lead is not given up, and so long as the subject peoples are not able to forge their own weapons of political warfare, political activities among the intelligentsia would naturally be deprived of that stamina or virility which flows from a consciousness of self-dependence and self-power. It is no use fighting over names of the goal to be attained by subject peoples and races; whether, indeed, it should be one of absolute independence, or of qualified independence, or of Dominion Status, if and so long as they must follow the leading strings of their political masters as to the road along which they must travel to reach the end of their political pilgrimage. It is never safe to depend upon others for your salvation; it is doubly so in the case of subject peoples who on the very hypothesis of Imperialistic governance must be victims of Imperialist domination and of Imperialist exploitation. It, therefore, follows that the moment we achieve this independence of purpose and method, the moment we cease to follow the political lead of the masters, the moment, not only the intelligentsia but the whole body politic would undergo a moral and spiritual transformation which would make the classes and masses potential masters of their destiny. To that end Mahatma Gandhi calls us to

, follow his lead, and his work in India would not be finished until Indians had felt and realized the inwardness of that lead.

My object in writing these pages is to help, however feebly, in making plain to my readers that Indian politics must no longer follow the lead of the Imperialistic West, if it should seek to free itself from the meshes of Imperialism. Imperialist statesmen of the newer school are trained men, experts in Imperialist science. They know the new business to which they have been called, and they have been taking to it with an avidity and zeal worthy of a better cause. Political schools of all shades and colours, whatever their other differences in the field of domestic politics, have progressively gravitated, or are progressively gravitating, towards the cult of Imperialist governance. Imperialism pays a thousandfold, and it is the object of the trained experts to reduce the Imperialist art of governance to a fine art. We, on the contrary, are but novices in the field of political warfare. We are groping our way. Our natural temptation would be to succumb to the lures set up by Imperialism and instal Imperial statesmen as our political Gurus. If so, it goes without saying that the period of our novitiate will have no ending. The evils of Imperialist "gifts" would so work on our mentality, and progressively deprive us of whatever lead or initiative we may still possess in the field of politics. Progressively we should have surrendered our birthright of independent political thinking and forging our own weapon of political attack. Then we should have learnt to perfection the art of co-operation with our political masters, and should have been swallowed up by, and assimilated in, Imperialism. We should have become junior partners with them in the work of exploitation of our inferior brethren, the vast teeming masses.

If this volume and the previous one be at all helpful for the purposes indicated, the need may arise in due course of bringing out a supplementary volume, completing the series. And the object aimed at would be to throw as much further light as possible on the problems and matters treated of in this and the preceding volume. For the need

is paramount of India planning and carrying out for herself her own method of political attack and political defence. She must not surrender her lead to another. Let us then begin with this form of "self-determination," and everything else, with God's blessing, will be added unto us.

SEVEN MONTHS WITH MAHATMA GANDHI.
PART I

CHAPTER I.

SWARAJ ACCORDING TO MAHATMA GANDHI.

The Bombay riots had no doubt come to an end ; but they brought home to Mahatmaji, as nothing else could have done, the fact that the first and foremost need for India was the spread and propaganda of non-violence as a dynamic factor of her political life. The efforts of the workers, so far as the preaching of non-violence among the masses was concerned, had fallen far short of what was required, and of what he had been led to expect. Nor had the workers themselves sufficiently imbibed the spirit of non-violence. He had set before himself the objective of an India-wide appeal of non-violence, and his belief was that if such an appeal could be broadcasted among the workers throughout the country, it was bound to meet with an irresistible response. For there was no gainsaying that in such measure as the workers had assimilated the spirit of non-violence in their personal lives, in that measure could they succeed in awakening that spirit in the lives of those that were violent or disposed towards violence. Therefore, and secondly, he saw that the preaching must not be by mere word of mouth. A mere lip-profession of non-violence could not lead to the maintenance of an atmosphere of peace. If by their daily conduct the workers could preach the true spirit of non-violence, and so demonstrate in their lives a spirit of goodwill for all, then alone would it be possible to establish in the country harmony in the place of discord, unity in the place of disunion.

Then, coming to the question of Hindu-Moslem unity, he felt that the principle of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) must be applied to solve it. The spirit of mutual hatred and ill-will that lay at the very root of the quarrel, and which occasionally had assumed such hideous and over-whelming dimensions, had to be curbed and controlled by self-restraint, and non-violent conduct. For to him it was a truism that as long as the Hindus and Mussalmans looked at each other

in the light of enemies, so long in their weakness and impotence they would naturally be induced to seek the intervention of the ruling authorities and place themselves under their protective wings, in which case the authorities would take advantage of the opportunity and seek to aggrandise themselves at the expense of both, by weakening each in turn.

Then, leaving aside for the moment the question of the intervention of the present foreign bureaucracy in the settlement of our communal quarrels, Mahatmaji would go further. Assume, he would say, that there was no foreign Government over us exploiting our mutual quarrels and hatreds, and suppose, he would say, that these continued in full vigour, what would happen? His answer is that even then it would not be possible for us to continue for any length of time in a state of isolation from the outside world, with our freedom intact. In other words, in our state of weakness caused by internecine quarrels, we should be liable to fall a prey to foreign aggression, even if we did not fall willing victims to it.

Mahatmaji would carry the argument still further. Assume, he would say, that we did not fall a prey to foreign aggression, even then, he would argue, there would be no Swaraj for the *masses*, unless of course our mutual hatreds had ceased, and we had become a united people under the all-compelling power of non-violence. For within the limits of India itself, there were plenty of domineering people who seek power and dominion, and taking advantage of our mutual hatreds and jealousies, would create further strife and discord, and play for their own hands. If these succeeded in establishing themselves in power, is it seriously to be argued, Mahatmaji would say, that they would turn over a new leaf and not tyrannise over the teeming millions and exploit them?

Thus, it is clear that the question is not merely,—How to be saved from the grip of the present foreign domination, or of possible future foreign invasion or aggression. The more pertinent question would be,—How was it possible for the general body of people, the great masses of the land, to rescue themselves when the need arose, from domination

and exploitation by the more powerful classes among their own countrymen? On the one hand, it would be natural for these classes, once securely placed in power over the people, but owning no allegiance to non-violence, to utilise such power for purposes of self-aggrandisement and general exploitation. On the other, it would be equally natural for the oppressed masses to seek to shake off, if possible, the domination of their own countrymen by resort to brute force or violence.

But it is possible, says Mahatmaji, to spread a wave of non-violence throughout the country, if we can enlist in the service of non-violence a considerable and growing body of workers imbued with the spirit of non-violence. The primary need for the country, therefore, according to him, is to secure their services, or to raise a body of non-violent workers devoted to the spread of non-violence. For Mahatmaji's proposition is that in proportion as *Ahimsa* or non-violence should become the guiding principle of our lives, in that proportion a desire not to dominate but to serve the general body of the people (the masses) would permeate the country.

A whole-hearted acceptance of the teachings of *Ahimsa* cuts at the root of the thirst for domination and self-aggrandisement, and gives rise instead to a longing for service, the service of the vast, multitudinous, poverty-stricken masses of the land. Those who intend to serve the general body of the people, and aspire to train and lead the General Will towards a new goal, must not therefore take to or think of the path of violence; but on the other hand should shun it. The expression of this trained General Will is true Public Opinion, which must be clearly differentiated and distinguished from the will or opinion of the privileged domineering classes. It follows that those whose aim is not to serve this Public Opinion, i.e., the General Will, or the will of the people, but on the contrary, to force their own will upon the people, so as to make the General Will impotent and subservient to their own will, would have or naturally be induced to take not to the path of non-violence, but to that of violence. And when the General Will or Public Opinion in the true sense of the word, had been

installed in the seat of authority then only would true Swaraj have been gained.

Summing up, according to Mahatmaji, Swaraj does not concern itself primarily with the destruction of foreign domination, seeing that such destruction may mean also the installation of an indigenous exploiting power; may mean, that is, the substitution of an indigenous domination for the foreign. Therefore, Mahatmaji's real object in inaugurating the scheme of non-violent non-co operation was to instal the General Will in the seat of authority as against the arbitrary will of a group or groups (whether foreign or indigenous); in other words, to make the latter subordinate and subservient to the former. To repeat, the ending of the foreign exploiting power, in the sense of driving out the English from the land, is not the primary concern of Mahatmaji. The essential thing, in his view of the problem of Indian Swaraj, is that the present bureaucracy should be brought under the control of Indian public opinion, so as to make it subservient to it. In other words, directly the methods of political domination, and economic exploitation of the masses, which are being pursued at present, and the consequent flouting of, and trampling upon, Indian Public Opinion should have been brought under real and effective control, or in the alternative, destroyed once for all, the substance of Swaraj would have been gained. In this sense, and this sense only, must be understood the famous, pithy declaration of Mahatmaji that the present system of Government must be ended if it could not be mended. There is no question of racial hatred here.

The question therefore is, How is it possible to achieve this substance of Swaraj through the power of non-violence? How is the enthronement of the General Will which is the substance of Swaraj, possible through the practice and preaching of non-violence? Mahatmaji's answer is short and unequivocal. He points out that the spirit of non-violence is the spirit of unity, and that without unity there could be no assertion of a true Public Opinion against a united bureaucracy. He amplifies his argument in the following manner. The greater the atmosphere of non-violence in the country, the more possible would it be to

create and maintain an atmosphere of peace, harmony and union among the varied divisions and classes of the people. And the greater such general harmony and unity, the greater would be the power and prestige of a united Indian Public Opinion. In other words, under these circumstances the General Will would be able to make itself felt, and the Indian masses would know how to protect themselves against the tyrannical will of political power. And so gradually the atmosphere of violence which surrounds the present Government would automatically dissipate itself, and the latter would, in the altered situation, brought about by a united and dominating Indian Public Opinion, have to descend from its high pedestal of arbitrary authority, and seek to ingratiate itself with such Public Opinion. In this way the inauguration and adoption of a national policy of non-violence would lead to the creation and enthronement of the General Will as against the arbitrary will of the foreign government, which has to be enforced and buttressed up by violence. In other words, a national policy of non-violence pursued with unerring aim would secure us the substance of Swaraj through the control of the bureaucracy by the General Will.

Now let us look at the other side of the picture. If the policy of non-violence be not accepted and adopted as India's national policy, it would only mean this, that a feeling of hostility and hatred against the foreign exploiting rulers would steadily grow and become rampant. Assume that the ultimate result of all this rise of temper against the foreign government ends in an organised revolt. Assume that the revolt is successful. What follows? The answer has already been adumbrated. We have seen that destruction of the present Government would not necessarily mean the installation of a true Swaraj, namely, a Swaraj in which the General Will, the voice of the people, *i.e.* the present exploited masses, would prevail, as against the will of the governing group or groups under the new indigenous regime. What do we find in other countries which are ruled by indigenous authorities, and not by foreigners? Do not the masses there have to wage an uphill fight against the governing classes? Everywhere in the so-called free countries we find the power of government resting securely

in the grip of governing groups in close association and alliance with the capitalist classes. The evidence of past history and also of contemporary events go to establish the proposition that in so-called free countries, the indigenous ruling classes, although clothed in the forms of democracy, have kept down the working masses or Labour in the interests of Imperialism and Capitalism. If such is the state of the general body of the people under indigenous government in free countries, there is need for great vigilance in the pursuit of a true Indian Swaraj. For the ending of a foreign government may leave the general masses exactly where they have been, and may even mean a worse plight for them. Therefore, even if by resort to organised violence, the foreign political power were chased out of the land, there would be no guarantee that the general body of the Indian people would come into their own. And so Mahatmaji has pointed out that "our desire should be to establish Swaraj for the people, and not substitute one class rule for another, which may be even worse."*

Hence the general conclusion at which Mahatmaji arrives is that in the type of Swaraj obtained by the violence of the military or other groups or classes, the General Will would not reign supreme and triumphant or even predominate. In other words the adoption of a national policy of violence would not save the Indian masses from the grip of India's governing and exploiting classes. The net result of this discussion is that, according to Mahatma Gandhi, the enthronement of a true Indian Public Opinion, and through it of Swaraj for the masses, are only possible through the inauguration of a national policy of non-violence and the adoption of non-violent methods and activities, such as are embodied in the constructive side of Non-violent Non-co-operation.

* Vide "Young India" 17 April 1924.

CHAPTER II.

PLAN OF FUTURE WORK.

The reader is aware that under Mahatmaji's direction I wrote a letter to Mr. Mukerji at Benares requesting him to take charge of "Young India", as Mahatmaji had decided to prolong his fast indefinitely unless the rioting at Bombay ended in a fraternal peace among the communities concerned, a contingency which Mahatmaji thought was highly problematical. The reply to this request came in the shape of a wire from Mr. Mukerji at 3 o'clock on the morning of the 23rd November. Mr. Mukerji was prepared to work as directed; but under Mahatmaji's guidance, for he had no fears about anything untoward happening to Mahatmaji. A further passage in that wire ran as follows:—"Bapuji is India's lover and his divine agonies are a paramount factor in the Lord's plan to save India's soul. The Lord is crucifying the true lover for the sake of the beloved."

When after a prolonged fast nourishment is taken, it produces an extra sluggishness in the body. Mahatmaji, having broken his fast that day, did not wake up at his usual hour of 4 A.M. He was delayed by an hour, and when he got up at 5 A.M., the first thing I did was to put into his hands Mr. Mukerji's telegraphic message. He went through the whole of it attentively, and then with a broad smile and quite a vigorous nod of his head, as if to say, "I quite follow", he began his day's work with writing Gujarati articles for the "Navajivan". The news that Mahatmaji had broken his fast only a few hours before had not reached Mr. Mukerji, or the people of Benares.

These riots in Bombay gave an altogether new orientation to the country's problems. The reader knows with what energy and concentration of purpose Mahatmaji had been pursuing the one object of attaining Swaraj in the course of the year, and that it was also feared that failure

for him might mean such a violent shock that his physical frame might even snap under it. On several previous occasions Mahatmaji himself had also hinted at some such possibility. So finding that the year was hastening towards its close, the more intimate among his followers and co-workers had been getting nervous and alarmed. Furthermore, my teacher, Mr. Mukerji, when sending me out to Mahatmaji, had mentioned some such untoward contingency, and had explained to me that my primary duty would be to render devoted personal service to Mahatmaji, and that I must not spare myself in such service. In his view, however great might be the shock, whole-hearted and devoted personal attention and service had an inherent moral power to neutralise at least in part the effect of such shock. It was his belief that however great the shock to Mahatmaji, due to a failure to achieve his mission in the course of the year, nothing untoward would happen unless it reacted on his mind so as to create an intense longing to leave the body. It was, therefore, necessary to guard against such a reaction, and for this, so my teacher held, there was nothing so powerfully effective as the whole-hearted devotion of personal service. The first few days of the Bombay riots were to Mahatmaji, as we have seen, days of mortal agony and dark despair, and his longing to take leave of his body had increased to such an extent that he had already commenced fasting for an indefinite length of time, which was not to be broken unless the warring communities agreed to a fraternal peace. But what Mahatmaji had hardly hoped for, and what at the time seemed to have been an impossible dream, became an accomplished fact, as the result, it might be, of Mahatmaji's utter self-surrender and humiliation of spirit. What was his delight when he witnessed the restoration of peace, not as the result of the activities of the military, but of the people themselves. The Bombay rioting had filled Mahatmaji's mind with blank despair, for he saw all his teachings of non-violence trampled under foot. But now with the advent of fraternal peace, Mahatmaji's spirit revived. He saw that the country was not wholly irresponsive to the message of peace and non-violence, on which he had wholly pinned his

faith. And under this inspiration, he felt that the future was not wholly dark, and that it was possible by better-directed efforts to make his message more effective as an instrument for the winning of Swaraj. The feeling gave him new strength and new energy to proceed with his task. Thus the restoration of peace in the circumstances mentioned gave a final quietus to his desire for casting off his body. On one of those eventful days, taking me into his confidence, he said, "The fact that by our unaided efforts we have succeeded in restoring peace is to my mind the precursor of Swaraj. If we had got demoralised and left to the Government and their military the task of restoring peace, then, we should have demonstrated our own impotence and worthlessness, and so have done immense harm to the Swaraj-movement in India".

The Working Committee of the Congress met on the day following the fast. We find Mahatmaji's complete recovery of spirit faithfully reflected in certain draft Resolutions which he placed before the Committee. They ran:—

"Whilst by reason of these tragic occurrences this Committee recognises the necessity of caution, it sees no cause for discouragement, but is of opinion that the after-events give the greatest cause for satisfaction and congratulation, in that the Co-operators, Non-co-operators, Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis and Christians, without being demoralised by the turbulent element, set about regaining control over them, and were successful in bringing about peace without resort to any Government assistance whatsoever.

"This Committee notes in the quick and voluntary restoration of peace, the great advance the nation has made in the practice of non-violence and responding to its natural leaders. This Committee invites Congress workers to use the occurrences as an indication of the weak spot in the national organisation and urges upon all Congress and Khilafat organisations the necessity of obtaining control over all turbulent elements in society.

"This Committee congratulates the citizens of Bombay

upon their having regained the confidence and control of the population, and also congratulates the nation upon the bravery of the volunteers and other Non-co-operators, who lost their lives, or were injured, whilst trying to prevent collision between rival factions".

This note of joy at the restoration of peace by the people's own efforts did not, as indeed the Resolutions hint, blind Mahatmaji to the fact that further advance was beset with no small difficulties. Therefore, he felt that more than ever it was necessary to preach with renewed zeal and greater persistence the gospel of non-violence and non-violent activities as the royal road to win Swaraj for the masses. And to this end, he set about devising what should constitute the plan of future work for the country.

Thus to Mr. Shankerlal Banker, one of his devoted adherents, and at the time Secretary to the Bombay Congress Committee, he gave special instructions as to how he was to bring under control the rowdy elements of Bombay. "So far", Mahatmaji told Shankerlal, "there have been no systematic efforts made to train and control the rowdy elements of the city. But henceforward in every street, and every lane, Congress outposts will have to be established, and a permanent body of volunteers be attached to each outpost, entrusted with the duty of maintaining peace." In one of the draft Resolutions which Mahatmaji brought before the Working Committee, he clearly laid down this particular aspect of the work of volunteers. Thus,—

"This Committee is further of opinion that all volunteer organisations should be so formed as to become responsible for the retention of a peaceful atmosphere within their respective jurisdictions, and that only such volunteers should be enlisted and retained as are known to be pledged to the strictest observance of non-violence."

The last idea is brought out more emphatically in one of the articles which he wrote at this time for *Young India*. There Mahatmaji says:—

"No volunteer will be retained who does not believe in non-violence. Every volunteer who has been guilty of using force, or even threat of force, by word or act, must be relieved of his charge." ("Young India", December 1, 1921.)

In the same article, we find Mahatmaji describing how peace is generally disturbed in a big city, and what means may be employed to restore it. It contains, in fact, a detailed and elaborate exposition of what he meant by his verbal instructions to Mr. Banker. The matter discussed is about the formation of a standing volunteer body entrusted with the work of policing the country, the same as is referred to in the first portion of the resolution of the Working Committee already quoted.

We have seen that among the Resolutions drafted by Mahatmaji, and brought before the Working Committee, the foremost in importance was the re-formation and re-organisation of all volunteer corps throughout the land. The lessons of the Bombay riots had left a deep and indelible mark on his mind and thought, and he was convinced that the one work before the country was not the launching of Civil Disobedience, but the preservation of peace throughout the country. Therefore, to that end the volunteer bodies must undergo a thorough overhauling, and be subjected to a superior training and a superior discipline. Hence, his most important proposal before the Working Committee was that the various volunteer organisations in the country, the Congress volunteers, the Khilafat volunteers and the Khalsa or Sikh volunteers,—should all be made integral parts of an All-India Volunteer organisation, imposing a uniform system of discipline and training on all.

Mahatmaji had little doubt that he would be able to persuade the Working Committee to accept this proposal of an All-India organisation of volunteer bodies. But there was another thing which was a matter of concern to him. The reader will remember there was a session of the All-India Congress Committee held at Delhi on 4th November, i.e., only two weeks before the riots broke out. By an outstanding resolution, that Committee had conferred the right of starting Civil Disobedience on all Provincial Congress Committees, subject, of course, to certain conditions. The full text of that resolution has been given in a previous chapter. For our present purposes only a portion of the same need be given:—

“The All-India Congress Committee authorises every

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Province on its own responsibility to undertake Civil Disobedience (including non-payment of taxes) in the manner that may be considered the most suitable by the respective Provincial Congress Committees, subject to the following conditions."

The conditions were somewhat stringent. A Provincial Committee was to prove its fitness for undertaking Civil Disobedience on a mass scale by a faithful observance of these conditions. But after the dangerous explosion at Bombay, Mahatmaji felt that it would be wholly hazardous for Provincial Committees to engage in a campaign of mass Civil Disobedience, such as many of them had been contemplating. In other words, Mahatmaji felt that the atmosphere in the country precluded all idea of allowing discretion to the Provincial Congress authorities in respect of the right conferred on them by the All-India Committee's Resolutions. And yet the Working Committee had no jurisdiction either to rescind it, or to modify it, although steps must be immediately taken to nullify it. Therefore, without rescinding that resolution, Mahatmaji drafted the following new resolution, which would have the effect of suspending the A.I.C.C. Resolution for the time being.

"This Committee desires to warn all Provincial Congress Committees upon embarking upon mass Civil Disobedience without first making certain of a peaceful atmosphere being retained throughout the Province concerned ; it being in the opinion of the Committee essential for the successful working of Civil Disobedience that whilst it is in action in one part of India the rest responds by remaining non-violent."

The Working Committee met in Mahatmaji's room at half past eight in the morning on 23rd November, and after some recess for lunch at noon, continued its deliberations till late at night. Mahatmaji's draft Resolution was placed before the meeting. It soon became a bone of contention. Within a few hours of his breaking the fast, Mahatmaji, feeble and emaciated, had the task thrown upon him of impressing upon the Committee the need that he saw of suspending the A.I.C.C. Resolution. He had to take inordinate pains to make it clear to the members

that in view of the Bombay riots he deemed it highly inadvisable to engage in a combat of Disobedience with the Government. Most of the time while the discussions were going on, I had to remain in my own room, attending to the heap of correspondence that had accumulated during the previous five or six days. Once, being called by Mahatmaji to supply him with a necessary document, I found Mr. C. R. Das in an unhappy mood. He was arguing against the suspension of the A.I.C.C. Resolution, and I observed that he felt very much disappointed at the thought of the postponement of Civil Disobedience. Mr. V. J. Patel also was stoutly opposing Mahatmaji. In the end, however, the Committee agreed to Mahatmaji's Resolution, Mr. Patel being the only dissident.

There are one or two little incidents that are worth recording as indicating Mahatmaji's spirit and the spirit of the leaders at the time. On 21st November at 9 P.M. after Mahatmaji had broken his usual Monday's silence, Lala Lajpat Rai accompanied by Pandit Motilalji came to visit Mahatmaji and enquired about his plan of future work.

Mahatmaji told Lalaji and Motilalji that the example of Bombay could not be ignored, and that he would make strenuous and renewed efforts in the light of the lessons of Bombay to lead the country along the path of non-violence. But what he was concerned about was how the coming Congress at Ahmedabad was going to deal with the situation. He was apprehensive lest the Maharashtra leaders should combine with some of the Mussalman leaders, and try to effect a change in the Congress creed of non-violence. He was optimistic enough, he said, to believe, that if the creed of non-violence remained intact he would be able to show very good results. But his point was that the creed must be upheld by a substantial majority of votes. If, however, the creed was retained on a bare majority of votes, he would not have the necessary strength to carry forward his work to a swift conclusion.

Lalaji looked quite despondent at the prospect of the suspension of the Civil Disobedience battle with the

Government.* Mahatmaji, on the contrary, was buoyant and hopeful. The fact that peace at Bombay had been restored by the unaided, non-violent efforts of the people themselves was for him a matter of the utmost significance. It spoke volumes for the potentialities of a national policy of non-violence, systematically and energetically pursued.

Thus out from the devastating dance of destruction at Bombay, out from the darkening clouds that had threatened to overspread the whole sky of the Indian continent, rose before Mahatmaji's eye the picture of a new hope and a new encouragement. Thus armed and fortified, like a giant refreshed, Mahatmaji started for his Ashram home. It was on the evening of Saturday, the 26th November, that we left Bombay by the Guzarat Mail.

* We find that a few months after, in his statement before the Magistrate's Court at Lahore, after his arrest, Lalaji had occasion to refer to this Resolution of the Working Committee, as follows : "It practically meant that the idea of mass civil disobedience was temporarily abandoned."

CHAPTER III.

THE BARDOLI TOUR OF INSPECTION—I.

Mahatmaji returned to the Ashram, but he had soon to leave for Bardoli again. This stay was only for four days. At the Ashram on Monday, 28th November, he observed his weekly silence ; but the day was also a day of fasting for him. On the occasion of the Bombay riots, he had taken a vow of a twenty four hours' fast every week. The twenty-eighth of November marked the beginning of this weekly fast. Now that on account of the Bombay disturbances he had suspended the projected Bardoli campaign of mass Civil Disobedience, there were eager questionings on every side as to what he was going to do next, and whether he would go out again on an All-India tour. His invariable reply was that he must confine himself to, and concentrate on, Guzarat. Only in the event of disturbances occurring elsewhere would he leave Guzarat to work for pacification. About this time letters of warning came to him from Bengal that there was likelihood of an outbreak of mob violence, similar to what had happened at Bombay, on the arrival of the Prince in Calcutta. The letters were under his direction forwarded to Deshbandhu C. R. Das.

According to the original programme, Mahatmaji was to have visited Bardoli on the 18th November on a tour of inspection, and then, if it was found that the preparations were satisfactory, to have launched a campaign of mass Civil Disobedience. But the Bombay riots, as we have seen, interfered with his plans, and the campaign had to be indefinitely suspended. Now, the people of Bardoli felt that they had been unnecessarily sacrificed for no fault of theirs but for the fault of Bombay, and they were not slow to give expression to their feelings of pain and mortification at the turn of events. Therefore, after a very brief rest at the Ashram, Mahatmaji had to leave for Bardoli to explain matters to the people and the workers there, and to assure himself that their energy and enthusiasm did not relax.

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He had also to examine for himself whether the work of organisation of the whole Taluka had sufficiently advanced with a view to its qualifying for a campaign of Civil Disobedience. So leaving the Ashram on the morning of 1st December, Mahatmaji arrived at Surat in the afternoon, and lodged for the night in the "Anavil Boarding," as it was called, an institution founded and conducted by brother Dayalji, one of the leading non-co-operation workers of those days. One small incident is worth recording. When the train carrying Mahatmaji arrived at the Surat station, a small party of Parsis, men, women and children on their way to Bombay, entered the compartment in which Mahatmaji was seated. They were taken by surprise when they saw Mahatmaji there, and unable to restrain themselves exclaimed "Gandhiji," "Gandhiji," while their eager, reverential eyes were rivetted on him. A small incident; yet it shewed how completely Mahatmaji had won over the Parsis by his magnanimity, his large-heartedness, and whole-hearted sympathy, and how he had succeeded in quenching the flames of racial antagonism that had blazed on those fateful days of the Bombay riots.

From Surat there is a branch railway line running eastwards. It is the "Taptee Valley Railway," which joins the G. I. P. Railway line at Amalner station. On this branch line, and at a distance of about twenty miles from Surat, is the railway station Bardoli, which was reached on 2nd December, at 10 in the morning. Some five minutes' walk from the station stood the "Swaraj Ashram", which was to have been Mahatmaji's headquarters in case the original programme of civil disobedience campaign could be carried out.

Bardoli is a Taluka which has within its jurisdiction 137 villages with a total population of about 87,000 souls. The village of Bardoli with its railway station, a Police Station, a Post and Telegraph Office, and other administrative institutions, is the principal village, being, in fact, the revenue and administrative centre of the whole Taluka. A Taluka in these parts would correspond to what in Bengal is called a Thana.

At the "Swaraj Ashram" Mahatmaji took rest, but it

was for a few minutes only. He immediately left by motor for Sorbhon, a village, his next destination. He took with him in his car Maulana Azad Sobhani, and Shrimati Anasuyaben of Ahmedabad. On the outskirts of the village Bardoli, there was a small stream which had to be forded, for there was no bridge of any sort spanning it. The banks were steep, but the bed was not deep. Mahatmaji's car successfully negotiated it, for the willing hands of a party of volunteers were there to help the car through. This gave us a foretaste of the strange experiences we had to go through in the course of our Bardoli tour.

And now motoring along village paths, and over arable lands, we reached our destination. It was a little after twelve noon. There at Sorbhon we somewhat unexpectedly met Shrimati Saraladevi, who had preceded us, and who had been awaiting Mahatmaji's arrival. Between Bardoli and Sorbhon were tiny hamlets all of which without exception announced their greetings to Mahatmaji by their decorations of green leaves and flowers. After lunch, Mahatmaji met the workers of Sorbhon in conference. Seeing so large a body of Khaddar-clad volunteers in such an ordinary village of between two to three thousand souls, one felt as if the whole population of the village had turned out at the call of the Congress, prepared to enter the lists, and follow the lead of Mahatmaji, in a war of peaceful, non-violent revolt. The workers sat in separate groups under their respective leaders, and maintained perfect order and discipline amongst themselves. And then began Mahatmaji's examination of them. The replies were given by the leaders of the different groups. These leaders gave also a report of the progress of the movement within their respective jurisdictions. Some gave out that all Government controlled schools within the territory served by them had been boycotted, and so the national schools were full of students. Some said that all quarrels and disputes within their jurisdictions had been amicably composed, and that the vice of untouchability had been eradicated from among their midst. It was sought to be made clear to Mahatmaji that every one was prepared under Mahatmaji's guidance to give battle to the Government following the path of peace and non-violence. All this was a source of satisfaction to

Mahatmaji, but there was one deficiency which had to be made up. Mahatmaji explained that Bardoli's production of Khaddar was not commensurate with her wants, for she had yet to import Khaddar from outside, so the workers must concentrate on the spread of the spinning wheel in order that she might be self-contained.

The function over, Mahatmaji had to attend a meeting of the ladies of the village. Most of them came to the meeting clad in Khaddar *saris*. Mahatmaji asked whether the assembled ladies had put on Khaddar only for the occasion, or whether they had accepted the message of Khaddar from their hearts, and so had discarded mill-made cloth once and for ever. Somewhat disconcerted, the ladies maintained a bashful silence, but one of them picking up a little courage said: 'Sir, Khaddar is very thick, and cannot be conveniently worn while engaged in working, and especially cooking.' Mahatmaji pointed out that if we were afraid of putting up with this small inconvenience, it was vain for us to hope for Swaraj. For without undergoing hardships, could we ever expect to achieve anything great? Then Mahatmaji recited a domestic incident in his life. On one occasion his wife also had preferred a similar complaint against Khaddar, and had begged permission to be allowed to wear mill-cloth while she was working in the kitchen. The reply which Mahatmaji had made to her was as follows: "I agree, I must not interfere with your freedom of action if you choose to discard Khaddar while you are cooking, but I would similarly expect you not to interfere with my freedom. Yes, you are free to cook with your mill-cloth on, but I must exercise a similar freedom by not taking the meal so prepared." This bit of personal domestic story was an eye-opener to the ladies, and they understood that similar acts of 'non-co-operation' and 'disobedience' on the part of their husbands might invade even their own households.

The ladies' meeting was followed by a public meeting which was addressed by Mahatmaji. After this we left Sorbhon about 3 P.M. for our next destination, which was another village called Vankaner.

We proceeded on our journey, and when we had passed

some little distance we met a volunteer on horseback, who rode in front of us showing the way. He had been deputed for this particular business, for there was some chance of our missing our way. When the limit of his jurisdiction was reached he went back to his own outpost after turning us over to the charge of another volunteer riding on horseback, who similarly led us on. I observed that the business of turning over charge was done quite unobtrusively by means of gestures and signals. There was no fuss over it; and I thought within myself that such training and discipline was well worthy of well-drilled soldiers. This example of discipline and methodical work delighted Mahatmaji. For the one thing on which he had set his heart was that the masses should be trained and disciplined like soldiers to be obedient, and organised. It goes without saying that out of organisation and discipline alone mass-strength, i.e., strength on a mass scale, is evolved and developed. No doubt such mass-strength might be misused. For the strength of a disciplined army is ordinarily employed to work out policies of destructive hostility, of war and bloodshed. But it was Mahatmaji's heartfelt desire that the spirit of organisation and discipline might become part of the character of the Indian masses so that it might be directed along channels of non-violence towards the fulfilment of a high national purpose. In the struggle for winning Swaraj by the method of non-violent non-co-operation, there was no place for schemes of violence or bloodshed. Yet the struggle could not be brought to a successful issue if it could not be carried out on a mass scale. And so unless the masses had the training, discipline, and restraint of true soldiers, there was danger of mob-violence breaking out. So from the very start Mahatmaji had prominently before him this question of organisation of non-violence for purposes of a non-violent campaign against the Government. And for the successful working out of this object the essential need was that the influence of workers over the people must grow unceasingly. For the extent to which the masses accepted the guidance of workers is the one simple test whereby we could judge about the capacity and influence of workers and the possibilities of organisation. Where there is no such capacity and in-

fluence over the masses, the work of organisation cannot make such headway. The capacity of workers to influence the people along the paths of discipline and non-violence is a sine-qua-non for the attainment of Swaraj by non-violent means. Our people, according to Mahatmaji, must begin to learn the lessons of restraint and discipline even while conducting ordinary public affairs. At our meetings, and, in fact, in every place where a crowd gathers, Mahatmaji has observed disorder and confusion, and he has been trying his utmost to remove this aspect of things; for its removal from his point of view would lay the foundations of Swaraj. The system of organised and disciplined work in the villages of Bardoli Taluka that was in evidence as we proceeded on our journey, showed to us that the workers had acquired a real hold on the people; and Mahatmaji was delighted that in the villages his teachings had taken effect.

Arriving at Vankaner we found all village roads and every village door decorated with leaves, flowers and festoons; but we met not a single soul on the way, as we took the broad road that traversed the village from end to end. It was as if the whole village had been lulled to sleep under some mighty spell. The fact was that the whole village had gathered together under the shade of a large banian tree on the very outskirts, and was waiting there in eager expectation of Mahatmaji's arrival. Nevertheless, when Mahatmaji actually arrived, not one single villager moved or stirred from his place, nor disturbed the prevailing atmosphere of peace and quiet by raising even a single shout of cheer. A second event is also worth recording. Usually, but specially in the remote interior parts of India, it happens that when a motor car enters a village like a bewitching apparition, the whole village is astir, and it is at once surrounded by an eager throng of village boys and girls. But here at Vankaner nothing of the kind happened. The discipline was remarkable, and it only showed the possibilities of organisation of the masses in Indian villages under competent guidance. It was a demonstration of self-restraint and capacity for organised work by simple unsophisticated Indian folk which delighted the heart of Mahatmaji, and one could not

help offering one's meed of praise and admiration for the responsible workers whose training had made the demonstration possible.

The way to the platform lay through the middle of the gathering. Mahatmaji passed through the people quickly enough, for there was no obstruction or inconvenience, and then taking his seat on the platform, straightway began the proceedings. When the business of the meeting had ended, the ladies present came near Mahatmaji's presence with their offerings, reverentially bowed before him, and then quickly retired. Our work at this village was over. And now the shades of evening were about to fall, and it was decided that Mahatmaji should take his last meal immediately before sunset (as was his usual practice), and then proceed to our next destination. It was Valor, a village where Mahatmaji was to take rest for the night. Myself and other companions set out in advance, and arrived there at seven in the evening. We had started from Surat at seven o'clock in the morning, and had not a moment's rest during the whole of the day. *I was feeling extremely tired.* There was a public meeting at Valor which Mahatmaji had too address in the evening. I stayed behind and took rest at our lodging.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BARDOLI TOUR OF INSPECTION—II.

It was past 9 o'clock in the evening when Mahatmaji returned to his lodging after the meeting at Valor. But there was no rest for him. He was kept engaged with workers of the village till one o'clock in the morning. They came, one batch after another, received instructions, and then retired. The President of the Valor Congress Committee, although bent down with age, had been working with unabated enthusiasm like any of the youthful workers. He was describing the progress of non-co-operation work within his own jurisdiction. In the course of his narrative he mentioned that a number of guardians not having withdrawn their boys from the Government school some of the Valor workers went on a hunger-strike with the result that the Government school had to close down. Mahatmaji, however, objected to this sort of action on the part of the workers. It was not the right thing to do. In cases like this, resort to fasting, Mahatmaji pointed out, was a form of violence. It was no good compelling the boys to leave Government schools by a hunger-strike, or a threat of hunger-strike. The right thing to do was to take steps to change the co-operative mentality of the guardians. Their opinions could never undergo a change by mere-intimidation. The appeal must be made to their reason as to the need for non-co-operation with the Government, so that they might ultimately recognise the necessity of co-operation with the people's wishes. The appeal might also have been to the hearts of the guardians. In that way alone could their conversion be possible and real. By the power of goodwill shown by non-co-operators, and by the power of services humbly rendered by them, they would have been able to reach the hearts of the guardians. Their conversion would then have been easy and lasting.

In the course of his narrative, the Valor President also referred to another striking incident. He informed

Mahatmaji that in his village there was a Parsi liquor-dealer who obstinately refused to comply with the wishes of the people and would not close his shop. Under the circumstance it was felt that there was no other way but to ostracize him. This was done, and he had to close the drink shop. That also was wrong, said Mahatmaji. People must on no account be harassed and forced to submit to the general will. That was not the non-violent way, which was enjoined upon non-co-operators. His plan, he said, was to conquer people by the power of service, and the power of goodwill. The opponent should be shown even greater respect and courtesy than what would be shown to people of our own party; and should be helped and sympathised with, in all his trials and difficulties.

Dayalji here interposed—"Bapu, your advice is excellent, but if we have to follow it literally, should we not have to stop all work?"

Mahatmaji—"Why, Dayalji?"

Dayalji—"Taking the present case. Here we have obtained a substantial result by resorting to a simple expedient. An insignificant exercise of power inherent in every society secures my object. You will, I know, disallow this sort of social pressure, however mild, and would ask us to serve the wine-dealer instead, and win him over. But by adopting your procedure one does not know when, if ever, this wine-selling business would be stopped. One would have to go on working with no certainty of obtaining results, and that also indefinitely; whereas my object would be very easily secured by this small, harmless exercise of social pressure."

Mahatmaji—"What object do you expect to secure by your act? Have you succeeded in striking at the root-cause, the liquor-dealer's desire for traffic in drink?"

Dayalji—"No, but then, I stop the traffic itself?"

Mahatmaji—"But, if to-morrow, taking advantage of an opportunity, the dealer started his business again, what then?"

Dayalji—"I would punish and harass him, and ostracize him again."

Mahatmaji—"Yes, you could have your own party, and go on harassing the man. But what if he also formed a party of his own composed of all who had been patronising his shop?"

Dayalji—"Bapu, to tell the truth, if I had the power, I would banish all bad people to a far-away island in the sea, where they would be kept confined."

Mahatmaji—"No, Dayalji, you are not the arbiter of the world's fate. It would not do for you to usurp the throne of the Almighty. God has not armed you with dictatorial powers. You may not demolish the world and re-fashion it according to your desires. What measure of sympathy, intelligence and ability has been vouchsafed to you by the Almighty Giver, that you may exercise for the good of your fellow-men, and see how far they bear fruit. Thus far and no further extends your jurisdiction. We must try to render service even to the wine-seller. You cannot raise a man by coercion or persecution; good will and service is the only way. Therefore, irrespective of race or creed, and without any thought of personal gain or loss, render service to one and all. It is by rendering such disinterested service that you will fulfil the purpose of God, and it is by such service alone should you be able to do real, lasting good to the world."

It was now one o'clock in the morning and the discussion had not yet come to an end. Mahatmaji's practice was to get up at four in the morning, and so the workers now retired for the night to give him some opportunity of rest. Mahatmaji, after a brief repose, woke up at the appointed hour, and then we all made preparations for a move. Our destination was the village Kadod in the northernmost extremity of the Bardoli Taluka. We had to cover a long distance. Mahatmaji was to travel by motor, and it was arranged that he was to start after his breakfast, while a party of us was to proceed in advance in bullock carts up to a station some six or seven miles off. Here, according to the arrangement, we were to avail ourselves of a motor bus, which was to take us to Kadod before Mahatmaji arrived there.

When the bullock cart journey was over, we found a big

motor 'bus awaiting our arrival. We took our seats in it, but unfortunately it would not move. The sun had already risen to some little height in the eastern sky, and soon Mahatmaji's car dashed past us, raising a cloud of dust from behind. Then, Kalyanjibhai (Secretary of the Surat Congress Committee) who was leading us, went to an adjacent hamlet, and hired a couple of bullock-carts for us. We then turned aside from the public road and proceeded by a shorter village route. The exquisite torture of negotiating in country-made bullock-carts the rough and rugged village paths with their thousand and one ups and downs could only be realised by those who have had a taste of it. It can hardly be described.

Our advance party had started from Kadod at 4 in the morning. A weird stillness then hung over the atmosphere. As we made our way in the darkness of the night, the village paths and plains, woods and hamlets, so strangely different from what I was accustomed to meet in my own native province of Bengal, struck me with a new wonder and a new fascination. I who was cradled in a small village in the eastern extremity of India in far away Tipperah, was now wandering through the villages of Surat, in the extreme west of the peninsula. We moved on and on, and passed hamlet after hamlet, separated by short distance, and all along the route the sight of eager villagers gathered together in groups and waiting with lighted torches to accord their loving greetings to Mahatmaji met our eyes. They had left their beds and their sleep : and from their enthusiasm it might well have been thought that the whole locality was engaged in holding some high festival, or commemorating some important event of their lives.

As I have said, we were the advance party carrying the message of Mahatmaji's advent, and at every hamlet or village that we passed we were the recipients of respectful greetings. In one village, as we passed, we saw a large body of 'untouchables' standing somewhat at a distance from the meeting-place, and timidly waiting there for Mahatmaji's arrival. Kalyanjibhai noticed it, went up to the assembled villagers, and admonished them with the following words. If the villagers were really unwilling to extend

cordial invitation to the untouchables as to their own brothers, and find room for them in the body of the assembly itself, Mahatmaji would not think it worth his while to stop his car and be there amongst them. The villagers now understood their duty, and in a moment agreed to renounce their prejudice and showed their eagerness to invite the untouchables to the meeting and allow them to take their seats in their midst.

Mahatmaji had preceded us at Kadod, and had addressed a public meeting there. When we entered the village it was about 10 A.M., and having just finished the meeting he was returning to his lodging. Our midday meal was ready, and we prepared to leave immediately for our next destination, the village of Wadad; for we were to be the advance guard of the party announcing to the villages the glad tidings of the near approach of Mahatmaji. This time an open horse-carriage was requisitioned by us, and in the company of Kalyanjibhai and Kumarjibhai (President of the Bardoli Taluka Committee) I proceeded. The whole countryside presented a spectacle of universal animation. Everywhere men, women and children appeared to be beside themselves with joy. Everywhere, as we advanced, we saw people engaged in eager preparations for according Mahatmaji a fitting welcome and reception. Even the poorest among the cultivators had for the moment forgotten all about the miseries of his existence, his daily struggles to eke out a living, and was all enthusiasm, decorating the door of his dilapidated cottage with all tenderness and care. At one place, the public road ran along the borders of a village; the rural folk turned out humbly to request that Mahatmaji's progress might be diverted a little, so that his car might be driven through the village. They felt that in that way the whole of the village would be sanctified. Amidst scenes of such unprecedented enthusiasm of villagers clad in Khaddar of spotless white, we approached the last remaining village to be inspected by Mahatmaji before the Bardoli tour was completed. No motor road had hitherto existed leading to the village. But an intoxication of zeal had possessed the souls of the villagers, and in the space of some forty eight hours, by working night and day, they had succeeded in making a motor road, a length of

half a mile or more, for Mahatmaji's motor to pass. It was christened "Gandhi Marga," *i.e.*, the "Gandhi Road," and it still exists as witness to the unbounded energy, enthusiasm, and determination of the people of Warad.

Arriving at Warad, Mahatmaji took some little rest, and then, as in other villages, he met the local workers in conference and gave them the necessary instructions. After this he went, and addressed the public meeting. Before it was dusk, he set out for the Bardoli village which was the starting point of our tour. He went ahead, and we made all haste and followed him. When we entered Bardoli he had gone to the public meeting and had begun addressing it. He congratulated the people of Bardoli on the excellent state of organisation of the Taluka, and extolled the workers. What impressed one was the number of devoted workers for the cause. Hardly anywhere else was there to be seen such a large number of earnest workers as at Bardoli.

This Taluka is also the home of many Indians returned from South Africa, who under Mahatmaji's leadership had taken their part in the South African Satyagraha campaign. They had a grasp of Mahatmaji's line of work, and of the methods and secrets of non-violent warfare. In the matter of national education, of the removal of untouchability, and of its anti-drink campaign Bardoli's achievement showed brilliantly. It could hardly have been surpassed, or even equalled, in any other part of India. In the matter of Khaddar also, so far as its use was concerned, there was hardly any place in India to which Bardoli yielded the palm. Nevertheless, Bardoli's production of Khaddar fell short of her requirements. She was still dependent on other parts of India for the completion of her quota of Khaddar. Mahatmaji, therefore, while extolling the workers, pointed out to them that the shortage had to be made up quickly, and that therefore no time was to be lost in stimulating the production of Khaddar up to the limits required. As soon as the work of the public meeting had been over we took train, and reached Surat at half past seven in the evening.

Thus starting on the morning of 2nd December from the

village of Bardoli, and visiting successively the southern, eastern, northern and western parts of the Taluka, so as to have made an all-round survey of the whole, we had returned to Bardoli on the evening of 3rd December. The roads of Bardoli are execrable, and the tortures of our enforced bullock-cart rides over village tracks and paths will ever remain imprinted on my memory. For as an after-effect of these rides I had a stomach-ache in the evening. It had seemed to me at the time that if the Government really wanted to inflict on the non-co-operators some effective punishment, then instead of locking them up in gaol, they could have enforced on the offenders opportunities of bullock-cart rides from end to end of the Bardoli Taluka ! Mahatmaji, however, even after this whirl-wind campaign, lasting full thirty-six hours, knew no fatigue. As soon as we had reached the Surat station, he opened his portfolio in the waiting room, and began his work of reading and writing. The train to Bombay arrived at 9 P.M., and we left for Bombay. The Bardoli tour was thus over.

CHAPTER V.

FORMATION OF AN ALL-INDIA VOLUNTEER CORPS.

We have seen that the Bombay riots gave a new orientation to Mahatmaji's plans. Firstly, he came to the very definite conclusion that the power delegated by the All-India Congress Committee on 4th November (1921) to the Provincial Congress Committees to engage in Civil Disobedience on their own responsibility would have to be withdrawn or suspended. Secondly, he felt that it had become imperative to formulate new rules and regulations for better organisation of the volunteer bodies then in existence throughout India. He was clear in his mind that these required to be thoroughly overhauled, and a more effective scheme of work would have to be evolved and substituted. Mahatmaji, in fact, had decided that no further advance in the direction of giving battle to the Government was possible or feasible until and unless the question of creating and maintaining an atmosphere of mass-non-violence throughout the country was solved once and for ever. This meant that there should in future be no repetition of scenes such as had been enacted in Bombay on the fateful days of 17th, 18th and 19th November. Thus there was to be no launching of mass Civil Disobedience at Bardoli as had been arranged for November 23 (1921), and the primary work thenceforth was to be the work of maintaining peace and overhauling the whole constitution of volunteer organisations. The Working Committee at its sitting of November 23, gave sanction to Mahatmaji's proposals, although the crying a sudden halt while marching towards Civil Disobedience could be done not without a pang. The fact was that Mahatmaji having ruled mass Civil Disobedience wholly out of court under the then circumstances, some of our well-known leaders, who had thrown themselves heart and soul into the non-co-operation movement, but could not see eye to eye with Mahatmaji on this particular matter, nevertheless felt constrained to submit to Mahatmaji's decision.

Thus, Mahatmaji's attempt to unfurl the banner of peaceful revolt at Bardoli had been frustrated by the Bombay riots, and after that how to maintain peace in every part of India so as to inaugurate a reign of mass-non-violence became the primary object of his activities. He had set himself to the task of evolving a new scheme of organisation and discipline of volunteers, disbanding those who had no faith in non-violence, and retaining those who had faith in non-violence and were prepared to submit to a course of discipline. To that end he placed before the Working Committee a series of draft resolutions, the most outstanding of which ran as follows :—

"This (Working) Committee considers it of national importance that all Non-co-operation Volunteer Corps, Khilafat Volunteer Corps, and other non-official Volunteer bodies, should be brought under control and named National Volunteer Corps."

As part of this Resolution, we further read :—

"This Committee advises the Provincial Congress Committees to appoint Central Boards in their respective provinces for controlling and bringing under uniform discipline all the existing Volunteer Corps."

Then, Mahatmaji placed before the Working Committee a long list of rules according to which the Volunteer organisations were to be formed. And he also advised that the Central Khilafat Committee, the Khalsa Committee, and other bodies, should all accept those general rules and work in harmony with the Congress resolution. Thus :—

"This Committee commends to the attention of the Provincial Congress Committee the following draft general instructions and further requests the Central Khilafat Committee, the Khalsa Committee and other bodies, if they approve of the recommendations of this Committee, to pass the necessary resolutions to give effect to them."

The purport of those general rules may be given as follows :—

Twenty volunteers would form a unit, and each unit would elect its own captain, to be called 'Leader.' Twenty such Leaders would among themselves elect one as their

head, called 'Officer.' All other officers would be appointed by the Provincial Board. In every province five members would form a Board or Central Committee of control. The Board will elect its own Chairman. In this way, Mahatmaji conceived the plan of forming a vast well-knit, well-disciplined body of non-violent soldiers for preserving the peace of the country. To put away from the minds of these volunteers all thoughts of their having to engage in a bloody fight, Mahatmaji took precaution at the very outset, and definitely laid down in his draft resolution that they should not adopt the uniform of soldiers, and they were positively forbidden to go about with swords. But if they so wished they might carry ordinary sticks four feet long.

About their duties Mahatmaji laid down that they would preserve peace and order, organise and regulate meetings, processions and hartals, and in case of emergency would render social service under the direction of their leaders. Every volunteer would have to sign a pledge in triplicate, one copy to be kept in the District Congress Office, one copy in the office of the Provincial Congress Committee, and the third to be given to the volunteer himself. The most important, and, indeed the first, clause of that pledge was that the volunteer was to render implicit obedience to the orders of his superior officers. The second condition was that he was to observe non-violence in word and in deed, and inculcate the spirit of non-violence amongst others. A third condition was that he must be prepared to run all risks attendant upon the performance of his duties. Needless to say that by making non-violence the central principle of this pledge, Mahatmaji made it emphatically clear that the main idea behind the formation of these volunteer organisations was nothing but the preservation of peace and the creation of an atmosphere of peace throughout the country. This pledge and all the other draft rules, drafted by Mahatmaji, were approved and adopted by the Working Committee at its sitting of 23rd November.

CHAPTER VI.

GOVERNMENT'S NEW MOVE : THE REPLY OF THE CONGRESS.

The regulations of 23rd November laid down the duty of volunteers in the following terms :—"The duties of volunteers shall be to preserve order, to regulate meetings, hartals, and processions, and render social service in emergencies in accordance with instructions given to them." Further, in case the volunteer had to face danger in performing these duties, he was required by his pledge to declare that he would not flinch from running all necessary and attendant risks.

Therefore, from the beginning it was arranged that the volunteer's responsibility related only to preserving order, and doing social service. A month after, by the resolution of the Congress at Ahmedabad, a more serious responsibility was laid upon him. By an application of the Criminal Law Amendment Act the Government declared the volunteer organisations unlawful. Thus these organisations had either to be disbanded, or the volunteers must be called upon to offer themselves for arrest and imprisonment. The Ahmedabad Congress chose the latter alternative, and invoked the whole of the adult population of India to seek imprisonment by joining the volunteer associations. It must be remembered that previous to this not a single volunteer had been instructed or allowed by the Congress, or the All-India Congress Committee, to offer open resistance to the Government.

The Congress Working Committee at its sitting of 30th December explained the true meaning and intention of the Ahmedabad Congress Resolution, asking volunteers to offer Defensive Civil Disobedience. It declared that "the object of the Congress in passing the Resolution regarding the volunteers was to assert the right of forming such associations inspite of notifications of disbandment of volunteer organisations issued by several local Governments." The further object of the Congress Resolution

was to make this movement of Defensive Civil Disobedience as wide-spread as possible. Thus the Working Committee laid down that "the object was also to get consistently with the requirements of the pledge the largest number of volunteers who will be prepared to suffer imprisonment."

This shows that after the Bombay riots, on 23rd November, the Working Committee had been confronted primarily with a single, and a comparatively simple, problem, that of the preservation of peace, for which purpose a new scheme for the better training and control of volunteer organisations had been prepared and adopted. But now the responsibility of the volunteers having increased on account of the aggressive steps initiated by the Government, the Congress had to ask the volunteers to submit to more rigorous conditions of national service and to the insertion of a vital addition to the conditions of a volunteer's pledge, as laid down by the Working Committee on November 23. A clause of the Working Committee's pledge of 23rd November ran as follows:—"I shall run all risks attendant upon the performance of any duty." This was the fourth or the last pledge laid down by the Working Committee. In its place the Congress pledge introduced two items which form the seventh and eighth clauses of the pledge. Thus:—

"(7) I am prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault, or even death for the sake of my religion and my country without resentment."

"(8) In the event of my imprisonment I shall not claim from the Congress any support for my family or dependants."

These two represent the last two clauses in the Volunteer's pledge approved and adopted by the Ahmedabad Congress. The pledge of 23rd November (Working Committee) contained only four clauses, whereas the Congress pledge was made up of eight clauses. The importance and significance of the Volunteer's pledge as laid down by the Ahmedabad Congress will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The eighth or last clause of the Congress pledge requires that the soldiers recruited for this struggle of non-cooperation had to join the movement in a spirit of dis-

interestedness, *i.e.*, without any motive of gain or material reward. If we go back to the resolution for Civil Disobedience adopted on 4th November by the All-India Congress Committee at Delhi, we find that the Committee was not in favour of having a body of paid civil resisters. It was expressly laid down that the Congress Committee would not hold itself responsible for the maintenance of civil resisters and their families. Thus:—"No civil resister should expect to be supported out of public funds and members of the family of civil resisters undergoing sentence will be expected to support themselves by carding, hand-spinning and hand-weaving, or any other means." Referring to this clause of the All-India Congress Committee's Resolution of November 4 (1921) M. Romain Rolland remarks—"To make the disinterested character of the movement clear, Registers were informed that neither they nor their families would receive any aid from the All-India Congress Committee."*

The movement for the reorganisation of volunteer bodies had been initiated by the resolution of the Working Committee, dated 23rd November, advising and recommending the formation of a National Volunteer Corps; while the Ahmedabad Congress called upon the country to invite imprisonment by becoming members of that corps. This was followed by a session of the Working Committee at Ahmedabad on 30th December (1921) at which it was decided among other things that the national volunteers should have to be classed under two heads—one, a permanent, active and whole-time body, and the other to form a Reserve. These Reserve Volunteers would not be whole-time workers of the Congress, but they might be called up for service any moment by the Congress authorities, when they would be required to leave all other work, and join in Satyagraha or Civil Disobedience in compliance with the directions of the Congress. Secondly, it was also laid down that volunteers registered on the Reserve list would not be called upon to engage themselves in maintaining order, etc. like other volunteers, but whenever necessary

* Vide p. 123 of M. Romain Rolland's "Mahatma Gandhi," translated into English by Katherine Groth (1st edition).

they would have to be prepared for imprisonment, assault, or even death. The Working Committee's Resolution ran as follows:—

“The Working Committee advises that there should be two lists, one containing the names of those volunteers who are prepared actively to serve the Congress; and the other of those who are otherwise employed but are ready to suffer imprisonment, assault, or death; and that volunteers registered on the Reserve list may not be called for any purpose save that of suffering imprisonment, etc.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE CIVIL RESISTER'S PLEDGE IN DETAIL.

The eight items formulated by the Ahmedabad Congress as constituting the pledge for a Satyagrahi are not all to be found in the previous pledge-form adopted by the Working Committee on 23rd November for volunteers under the revised scheme. In the last-mentioned volunteer's pledge there were, as we have already seen, only four clauses, the most important of which, as constituting so to say his article of faith, was that the volunteer "shall observe non-violence in word and in deed, and shall inculcate the spirit of non-violence amongst others." Besides this, there was another clause which stipulated that the volunteer "shall regard the pledge as binding upon him so long as the policy of non-violence is continued by the nation." The last and the fourth clause was that "he shall run all risks attendant upon the performance of his duty," which consisted mainly in the preservation of order, regulating meetings, hartals and processions, and rendering social service in emergencies. The old volunteer having henceforth to do the duties of a civil resister, the Ahmedabad Congress made all the foregoing pledges still more hard and introduced a few more items or conditions, some of which might well be regarded as the Civil Resister's article of faith. Thus, belief in the removal of untouchability; in the unity between Hindus, Moslems and other Indian communities; in the need for the adoption of Swadeshi, or Khaddar; and (fourthly) the belief that under the present circumstances of India, the righting of the Punjab wrongs, the satisfaction of the Khilafat claims, and the attainment of Swaraj were possible only through the adoption of non-violent means, and not by any other,—all these items were specifically introduced in the new Congress pledge for acceptance by the volunteers, now turned into Civil Resisters. The eight clauses of the revised pledge are given below :—

- “(1) I wish to be a member of the National Volunteer Corps.

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- “(2) So long as I remain a member of the Corps, I shall remain non-violent in word and deed and shall earnestly endeavour to be non-violent in intent, since I believe that as India is circumstanced non-violence alone can help the Khilafat and the Punjab and result in the attainment of Swaraj and consolidation of unity among all the races and communities of India, whether Hindu, Mussalman, Sikh, Parsi, Christian or Jew.”
- “(3) I believe in and shall endeavour always to promote such unity.
- “(4) I believe in Swadeshi as essential for India's economic, political and moral salvation; and shall use handspun and handwoven Khaddar to the exclusion of every other cloth.
- “(5) As a Hindu I believe in the justice and necessity of removing the evil of untouchability and shall on all possible occasions seek personal contact with, and endeavour to render service to, the submerged classes.
- “(6) I shall carry out instructions of my superior officers, and all the regulations, not inconsistent with the spirit of this pledge, prescribed by the Volunteer Board or Working Committee, or any other agency established by the Congress.
- “(7) I am prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault, or even death for the sake of my religion and my country without resentment.
- “(8) In the event of my imprisonment I shall not claim from the Congress any support for my family or dependents.”

How to account for this length and severity of conditions laid down in the Ahmedabad Congress pledge? The answer lies in the addition to the responsibilities of the volunteer. The old volunteer had nothing more to do than organising peaceful meetings, hartals and processions, preserving peace and order, and rendering social service on occasions. But now the volunteer was no longer a mere volunteer. The Government having chosen to enforce the

Criminal Law Amendment Act and declared all volunteer organisations as unlawful, every volunteer, who enlisted himself as such, became *ipso facto* guilty of disobedience of official orders promulgated in the name of law, and so liable to punishment. And so from a mere volunteer he became a Satyagrahi, a defensive civil resister, in order to assert every citizen's primary right to form peaceful associations. He was to engage himself in individual civil disobedience, and break the new law promulgated by the Government for the disbandment of the volunteers. But if this was so, the rules applicable to civil resisters must also be inserted in the pledge that a civil resister was to sign. At the All-India Congress Committee's session held at Delhi on November 4 (1921) these rules had already been formulated in detail. Hence what the Ahmedabad Congress did was to insert these rules into the body of the pledge to be signed by every member of the National Volunteer Corps formed under the Working Committee's Resolution of November 23 (1921).

Thus, owing to the aggressive policy of the Government, taking away from the people the elementary right to form peaceful associations, the national volunteers were compelled to give open battle to them in their two-fold capacity of Satyagrahis and volunteers. The qualifications of an individual civil resister demanded by the All-India Congress Committee of 4th November have already been stated in a previous chapter.* But for the convenience of the reader they are also given here :—

"In the event of individual civil disobedience the individual must know hand-spinning, and must have completely fulfilled that part of the programme which is applicable to him or her, *e.g.*,

- (1) he or she must have entirely discarded the use of foreign cloth and adopted only hand-spun and hand-woven garments,
- (2) must be a believer in Hindu-Muslim unity and in unity amongst all the communities professing different religions in India as an article of faith,

* Vol. I of this book.

- (3) must believe in Non-violence as absolutely essential for the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs, and the attainment of Swaraj,
- (4) and, if a Hindu, must by his personal conduct show that he regards untouchability as a blot upon nationalism."

These clauses being now applicable to volunteers in their capacity of Satyagrahis or individual civil resisters, were incorporated as so many additional clauses in the new pledge of national volunteers adopted by the Ahmedabad Congress.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOVERNMENT ON THE WARPATH.

The thrill of enthusiasm and excitement which convulsed the whole of India from one end to the other in December, 1921, will long be remembered as a memorable event in the political history of the country. The first year of the agitation for Swaraj had drawn to its close. Mahatmaji had saved the country from the danger and risk of the movement getting out of control as the result of the riots in Bombay in November. And for ensuring the future peace of the country he had been engaged in organising under the aegis of the Congress a disciplined body of volunteers, thus placing the movement on a more solid basis. He was particularly anxious to create an atmosphere of mass non-violence throughout India, so that he might feel assured that there should be no outbreak of violence in the rest of the country, when the time would arrive for him to undertake a campaign of mass Civil Disobedience at Sardoli.

Though the disturbances of Bombay in November resulted in the postponement of civil disobedience, the workers and the people in general found sufficient scope for their energies under the new scheme of the Working Committee promulgated on November 23. Not much disappointment was, therefore, felt on the score of frustrated hopes. They had to throw themselves heart and soul into the new work of re-enlisting and re-organising volunteers. But just when they had chalked out their path, and everything seemed to promise success, the Government launched their offensive against the movement. The visit of the Prince of Wales, which was under the ban of the Congress, and the successful hartal both at Bombay and Calcutta on the day of the Prince's landing on the shores of India, gave Lord Reading an opportunity and a handle to attempt to crush the volunteer movement of the Congress. One after another all the principal Congress leaders in the Punjab, in the United Provinces, in Bengal and in Assam

were placed under arrest. The Government set in motion the Criminal Law Amendment Act declaring all volunteer organisations as unlawful. The Seditious Meetings Act was also brought into requisition ; and further by a free, lawless and tyrannical use of Section 144 and the security sections of the Criminal Procedure Code, all Congress work was sought to be brought to a standstill. In trying to cope with this organised lawlessness of the Government by non-violent methods, thousands of non-co-operators, openly disobeying the illegal orders of the bureaucracy, cheerfully welcomed arrest and imprisonment.

A rapid survey of events of this period is necessary in the interests of a proper understanding of the N. C. O. movement. Immediately after the deplorable incidents of 17th November in Bombay, that is on 19th November, the then Governor of Bengal, Lord Ronaldshay, issued a notification proclaiming all organisations of volunteers under the Congress and the Khilafat as unlawful bodies, and ordered suppression of Congress public meetings. The Governors of the Punjab, the United Provinces, Behar and Assam followed suit, and introduced a universal policy of repression in their respective provinces. In Bengal at this time no organised body of volunteers had existed, but as a protest against the official brow-beating, and in assertion of the primary right of free association and free meeting, Indian leaders, headed by Shyamsunder Chakravarty and Jitendralal Banerji among Hindus, and Maulavi Akram Khan and Mujjibar Rahaman among Mahomedans, immediately threw themselves whole-heartedly into the work of enrolling volunteers in public meetings, and publishing their names in newspapers. This was in the absence of Deshabandhu C. R. Das from Bengal, who was engaged in attending a meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Bombay. When he returned all the powers and responsibilities of the Congress and the Khilafat Committee in Bengal were formally entrusted to him. Under his leadership a more systematic campaign of non-violent resistance to the official notifications and illegal orders was undertaken. The leader who was first arrested was Mr. Jitendralal Banerji. The charge that was laid against him was that of spreading disaffection, and

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a sentence of two years' rigorous imprisonment was meted out to him. And so hundreds and hundreds of volunteers in a regular succession of unending batches gladly submitted to the penalty of being arrested and imprisoned as the result of disobeying the illegal orders and notifications of the bureaucracy.

CHAPTER IX.

MAHATMAJI GIVES THE LEAD.

Bengal it seemed was the first to be hit. Mahatmaji had in the meantime been in the Bardoli Taluka, as has already been mentioned, on a tour of inspection, and returned to the Ashram on the 6th. He had been in touch with the rapid progress of events, and by an article in "Young India" entitled "Disbandment of Volunteers," which appeared on 1st December, he gave the lead to the whole of India. The official notifications against public meetings must be resisted at all costs and volunteers should be enrolled everywhere in defiance of the Government orders. That was the first part of his lead. But he also advised the workers to seek imprisonment quietly, one after another, that is to say, without fuss or demonstration; for such demonstration might be the precursor of violence. Lastly, he made it clear that disturbances must be avoided at all costs. If there was any risk of disturbance anywhere, then the better course for the workers would be first to learn the lesson of non-violence through patiently submitting to the illegal orders of the Government. This, Mahatmaji knew, might prove "irksome," and even "repugnant." Nevertheless, his injunction was that "the retention of a non-violent atmosphere is more important than imprisonments. Therefore, no province will be justified in taking the risk of an outbreak of violence and precipitating imprisonments by disregarding the orders of disbandment."

In the Government notifications the charge was laid against the volunteers that they were guilty of violence and intimidation, and of creating disaffection and anarchy. On this Mahatmaji wrote in the same article.—"We must be sure of our ground. The allegation against the corps is that they are assemblies to use force, and not to keep peace. Our first duty is to examine the charge and purge ourselves of guilt, if there is any, in us. Every volunteer who has

been guilty of using force, or even threat of force, by word or act, must be relieved of his charge."

Mahatmaji's article gave the needed lead. The provincial workers and leaders had been eager for a sign from Mahatmaji as to his views at this juncture of the nation's affairs. For it must be remembered that the Working Committee Resolution of November 23 had not contemplated the step taken by the Government for the suppression of the volunteer organisations. Therefore, the lead given by Mahatmaji on 1st December in the columns of "Young India" in the shape of the article "Disbandment of Volunteers" was eagerly accepted, and the workers felt that they were proceeding on right lines. Accordingly, the first thing that the provincial leaders did was to offer themselves for enrolment as volunteers, knowing full well that by such enrolment they would have made themselves liable to arrest and imprisonment. They signed the volunteer's pledge as formulated by the Working Committee of November 23. This gave a great impetus to the enlistment of volunteers from among the rank and file, and people began to come in their hundreds and thousands to be members of the volunteer corps in compliance with the rules and instructions laid down by the Working Committee at their session of November 23. Thus, the object of the Government in declaring the volunteer organisations of the country as unlawful was frustrated. For, the more the Government sought to suppress the volunteer movement, the greater the determination with which the people opposed them.

CHAPTER X.

CUNNING DIPLOMACY.

This determined action on the part of the non-co-operators was proclaimed before the world by the Government as an act of unrelieved aggression on the part of the Congress, as a sort of rebellion against the Government, against its system of Law and Order. The non-co-operators had, it was made to appear, risen in revolt against Lord Reading and his Government, who were therefore justified in repressing the former with an iron hand. But the fact of the matter was that the Government in proclaiming the volunteer organisations as unlawful had taken away the people's primary right of peaceful association and peaceful meeting. In this respect, therefore, the Government were on the war-path, while the non-co-operators were on the defensive, trying to ward off the blow that had been aimed at them. The original issue of righting the two great wrongs of the Punjab and the Khilafat, and of Swaraj, could not be prosecuted if the primary right of peaceful association and peaceful meeting was taken away. All Congress work, and, in fact, all political work, would be brought to a standstill if that primary right were denied to the people. The original programme of launching a campaign of mass civil disobedience with a view to enforce the original triple demand had to be given up at least temporarily. For the Bombay riots showed that the atmosphere of mass non-violence was wanting, and the Congress had to begin anew, and with renewed vigour, the work of preservation of peace throughout India. But with the notifications issued under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the issue had changed. In the words of Mahatmaji,—“Swaraj, the Khilafat, the Punjab occupy a subordinate place to the issue sprung upon the country by the Government. We must first make good the right of free speech and free association before we could make any further progress towards our goal. The Government would kill us if they could by a flank attack.

To accept defeat in the matter of free speech and free association is to court disaster. If the Government is allowed to destroy non-violent activities in the country, however dangerous they may be to its existence, even the Moderate's work must come to a standstill. In the general interest, therefore, we must defend these elementary rights with our lives. We cannot be coerced into welcoming the Prince, nor can we be coerced into disbanding the volunteer associations. No cost is too great in purchasing these fundamental rights."

The cunning diplomacy of Lord Reading's Government sought to saddle the non-co-operators with having wantonly precipitated hostilities with the Government; whereas the truth of the matter was that the Government took advantage of the Bombay disturbances and the Prince's visit to strike at the root of the movement by, what Mahatmaji aptly characterised as, a determined "flank attack." The campaign of individual defensive civil disobedience against the Criminal Law Amendment Act notifications started by Mahatmaji was, therefore, purely a defensive act against the wanton aggression of Lord Reading's Government.

CHAPTER XI.

ORGY OF ARRESTS AND IMPRISONMENTS.

On arriving at the Ashram on 6th December, Mahatmaji received a letter from Lala Lajpatrai written on the morning of Lalaji's arrest. Ever since the arrest of the Ali Brothers, Lalaji had been telling Mahatmaji that he would have to "take leave" of Mahatmaji soon. He had had intimation of the secret counsels of the Government in respect of him. It was Mahatmaji's general direction that there should be no act of aggression, or want of restraint, on the part of the people. In conformity to this policy, Lalaji had been guiding the overflowing energy and enthusiasm of his compatriots in the Punjab with great tact and caution, and with the dexterity of an expert. But the ruthless way in which the elementary and primary rights of the people began to be trampled under foot so as to make all progress in non-violent political activity impossible, showed to Lalaji, as indeed to everybody else, that further submission was not possible, and that illegal orders had to be disobeyed, cost what it might. No one has preserved or prepared a complete list of the illegalities perpetrated by the Government since the inauguration of the non-cooperation movement, but if a list had been prepared, it could have been perhaps shewn that the high-handed and illegal methods of Major Ferrar, the then Deputy Commissioner of Lahore, had found no parallel even among the many acts of Governmental tyranny and oppression in those days. Major Ferrar took it upon himself to declare even a meeting of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee 'a public meeting' under the "Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act." Defying this order of Major Ferrar, Lalaji called a meeting of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee on 3rd December, and attended it with the rest of the members. As a consequence, he was arrested together with three of his other colleagues, namely, Mr. Santanam, Dr. Gopichand and Maniklal Khan. The meeting was then

dispersed by the application of "force." The arrest of Lalaji, however, did not damp the energy and spirits of the remaining workers. In the place of Lalaji, Mr. Aga Safdar, a noted Mussalman leader, was immediately elected President of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, and under his guidance the campaign of enrolment of volunteers and disobedience of the Seditious Meetings Act was continued.

Similar news of the arrest of noted leaders of other provinces began also to pour in. Mahatmaji was informed that certain principal Congress and Khilafat workers of Ajmer had been sent to prison. So also Pandit Harkarnath Misra, Maulana Salamutullah, Chaudhury Khaliquzzaman, and other leaders of Lucknow had been arrested. The wires had also flashed the news that Mr. Jitendralal Banerjee of Calcutta had been arrested on a charge of sedition. The foremost Congressmen of Assam Messrs. T. R. Phookan and N. C. Bardoloi had similarly served as fuel to the fire of Government wrath. The spectacle of this orgy of arrests, at once simultaneous and universal, gave Mahatmaji unbounded joy. But the example of promptness and spontaneity with which Aga Safdar Sahab had taken the place of Lala Lajpatrai as the helmsman of the Congress in the Punjab had pleased him most. So he told us that the Government might do what it liked, but if our work could be continued with such smoothness and regularity as in the Punjab, victory was assured. Hence, full of hope, on 7th December, Mahatmaji was thinking of leaving Sabarmati on the 12th to inspect the Anand Taluka of District Kaira, and returning on the 15th to the Ashram. It may be in the recollection of the reader that like the Bardoli Taluka, Anand Taluka also had been authorised and empowered by the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee to qualify for mass civil disobedience.

But on the very night of 7th December about 11 P.M., the watchman of the Ashram, with two telegrams in hand, came and roused Mahatmaji from his sleep. I was sleeping near him. I hurriedly got up and received the telegrams. Both of them were from Allahabad, one from Mr. Mahadev Desai informing Mahatmaji that Pandit Motilalji, Jawahar-

lalji, and Shamlal Nehru, and Mr. George Joseph, then editor of the "Independent," the organ of the Non-co-operators in Northern India, had all been arrested, and urging that Mahatmaji's son Devadas might be immediately sent to Allahabad. The sender of the other wire was Mr. Godbole, then Joint Assistant Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee whose office was then at Allahabad, the place of residence of Pandit Motilalji, then Secretary of the Indian National Congress. Mr. Godbole asked for Mahatmaji's advice as to the arrangements to be made for running the Congress Office in the absence of Pandit Motilalji, who had been arrested.

Mahatmaji had not expected to hear of Motilalji's arrest. He had been under the impression that the Government was not likely to lay hands on Motilalji. For the latter's influence over the officials of the United Provinces was such that Mahatmaji had thought they would think thrice before putting him under arrest. He, however, never realised that the Government would not flinch from taking even extreme steps in pursuance of their policy. When he finished reading the telegrams, he broke out rather abruptly with the words—"So Das (Mr. C. R. Das) is also going to be arrested soon, and my own arrest also cannot be put off for long." Early in the morning when the prayers were over, Mahatmaji broke the news of Motilalji's arrest to the meeting, and asked his son Devadas to make ready to start for Allahabad that very day. He also expressed the opinion that in case he was arrested, it would not be right to launch mass civil disobedience. The programme of Khaddar that was before the country should be enough to engage the time and energy of the whole people.

Returning to his room after prayer, he started writing an article in reference to Motilalji's arrest under the caption "Love, not Hate." As soon as the writing was finished, it was forwarded to the "Young India" Press at Ahmedabad to be published as a supplement to "Young India" (8th December, 1921). The article although written directly in reference to Motilalji's arrest was composed also with another object in view. Mahatmaji was thinking of his

own arrest which might come any day. He wanted, therefore, to explain to the public how the movement was to be conducted as soon as he was removed from the political arena of India. From this point of view, the article may be taken as Mahatmaji's political will and testament. He has brought out therein the ideal which nerved him on in the prosecution of the movement. He has explained his position as to how he had thought he would be able to bring the Government under popular control, and make it subserve the popular will. But the cardinal note that rings through the whole article is given in the following extract,—“Victory is complete if non-violence reigns supreme in spite of these arrests; disastrous defeat is a certainty if we cannot control all the elements so as to ensure peace. We are out to be killed without killing. We have stipulated to go to prison without feeling angry or injured. We must not quarrel with the condition of our own creating.”

The concluding words of the article are with reference to the ensuing Ahmedabad Congress. The air was thick with rumours that the Government had resolved on laying violent hands on the Congress, and employing force to disperse it. Mahatmaji, therefore, ended his article on the following note.—

“We must hold the Congress at any cost, in spite of the arrest of everyone of the leaders, unless the Government dissolves it by force. And if we are neither cowed down nor provoked to violence, but are able to continue national work, we have certainly attained Swaraj. For no power on earth can stop the onward march of a peaceful, determined, and godly people.”

CHAPTER XII.

EXCITING NEWS.

Mahatmaji had expected that large crowds of people from far and near would flock to Ahmedabad during Congress time. He had accordingly made elaborate arrangements for musical entertainment, and invitations had been sent out to the leading musicians of India to be present at Ahmedabad for the occasion. But he sent for the Secretary in charge of that Department, and asked him to cancel all other items in his programme except the most indispensable ones. Motilalji's arrest was to Mahatmaji a clear indication that the Government might pursue its mad career to any length. In that event there was not any particular likelihood that the general public would assemble at Ahmedabad in any great numbers. Only the Congress workers in the different provinces would attend the Congress to hold their deliberations. That day varied rumours began to reach us from the city touching the intentions of the Government in connection with the Congress session. It was even whispered that the Congress would not be allowed to sit, but would be dispersed by force.

Devadas started for Allahabad the same day. As we shall presently see, the march of repression only sent up Mahatmaji's spirits. He was found to be very cheerful when he gave Devadas leave to go to help in carrying on non-co-operation work. Mahatmaji knew that Devadas would not be left free for long, and that he was going as a sacrifice to the cause. The thought cheered up Mahatmaji, and when Devadas came by way of leave-taking to touch his father's feet, Mahatmaji radiant with smiles gave Devadas a smart slap on the back as an expression of heartiest good wishes.

The next day following, the 9th December, from early morning telegram after telegram began to pour in from different parts of the country full of news of arrests of the great leaders, setting up a current of excitement and enthusiasm through the whole of the Ashram. Six months of imprisonment for Pandit Motilalji; two years for

Mr. George Joseph ; Basanti Devi, wife of Deshabandhu C. R. Das, and Urmila Devi, his sister, arrested—such were among the items of exciting news. At Allahabad, Mr. Krishnakanta Malaviya was eager to court imprisonment by defying the high-handed, and arbitrary orders of the Magistrate of the District, and was only awaiting Mahatmaji's permission. From Lahore, Aga Safdar Saheb had written two letters containing detailed description of the incidents connected with Lala Lajpatrai's arrest. A public meeting had been convened by the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee at the Bradlaugh Hall at Lahore ; but long before the appointed hour the Hall had been surrounded and taken possession of by the armed police. The meeting could not be held at the Bradlaugh Hall, but nothing daunted, the people had met at another public place and thus disobeyed the Government's order. Mahatmaji was informed that it had been decided to disobey the Seditious Meetings Act only at Lahore and Amritsar ; but as regards the enrolment of volunteers, it had been taken up simultaneously at eight different districts of the Punjab. The police at Lahore had wantonly assaulted and inflicted severe injuries on a volunteer. Such, and many others like these, were the items of news Mahatmaji learnt from Aga Safdar Saheb's letters.

In the meantime, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel* had begun to send telegrams to Mahatmaji urging him to summon an emergency meeting of the Working Committee without delay, and expressing also his readiness to fill up the vacancy in the office of the Working Secretary of the Indian National Congress caused by the imprisonment of Pandit Motilalji. From Salem in South India came a lengthy telegram from the aged Mr. Vijayaraghavachariar, who had filled the Presidential chair of the India National Congress of 1920 held at Nagpur. He was eager and anxious to come to Mahatmaji's help, and inquired of what use he could be to him at that critical juncture. "Situation hourly becomes gloomier. Can I personally do anything after Panditji's, Lalaji's and other prominent leaders' arrest?"—such was the purport of his telegram.

* At present President of the Legislative Assembly of India.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW REPRESSION FOUND MAHATMAJI.

When he read the telegram about the arrest of Basanti Devi, wife of Deshabandhu C. R. Das, Mahatmaji felt like a child brimming over with sheer joy. It appeared to me that no other news of arrest had given him so much unallayed satisfaction and joy as this. He told us that the defeat and set back which the movement had sustained on account of the Bombay riots had been by the grace of God more than compensated under present circumstances. After the evening prayer, he broke the happy news to assembled Ashram members. His joy was so great that he could not check himself while speaking about this arrest. He indulged in jokes, laughing and making the whole body of Ashramites shout with laughter. In fact, I had never found him before in such a hilarious mood. Who among the ladies of the Ashram were ready and willing to seek the hospitality of the Government gaols?—inquired Mahatmaji. The response was instantaneous. Almost all of them were ready and would cheerfully go to prison to serve the cause. But some among the ladies had had their baptism in the gaols of South Africa, and these were most eager to undergo a further test and prove their unabated strength and courage. But said Mahatmaji—“The women of Bengal have this time beaten you hollow.”

After the evening prayer meeting, he passed some time in his own room, and then went out for a stroll. His whole frame seemed to be tingling with joy. In sheer delight his body was swinging now on one side, now on the other, as he was advancing. Mahatmaji at this moment reminded me of the school or college student, who when his examination was over was feeling the delight of new found freedom. For three or four months prior to his examination, the student had worn out his body and mind by incessant toil and worry, and now after his examination felt relieved of a heavy strain, and free and happy as a bird. The fact of

the matter was that Mahatmaji had begun to feel that the purpose of his movement had been attained. When he left his room for the stroll it was about 8 P.M. Finding him going out alone in the dark, "Ba" (Mrs. Gandhi) enquired of him where he was going. He did not make any reply. I followed him with a lamp for some short distance, but uncertain as to whether he would like it, I retraced my steps. Mahatmaji was in high spirits when he came back in the company of Pyeralalji, both of them talking and laughing in a loud tone.

At the time of his arrest Motilalji had laid upon Mahadev a particular obligation that the "Independent" paper should have to be kept up under any circumstances. If Mahadev was arrested, Motilalji had expressed the wish that Mahatmaji was to find his successor to take charge of the paper. Mahatmaji informed Pyeralalji of Pandit Motilalji's wishes, and enquired whether Pyeralalji was ready for this work. Then, it was decided that Pyeralalji should proceed to Allahabad the very next day to take up the work; and he was told that, if necessary, a series of workers might have to be sent to gaol and take up the place of the arrested editor, and so keep the flag of the "Independent" flying. After this Mahatmaji gave me some instructions in connection with his correspondence, etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARCH OF REPRESSION.

Then, at about 11 P.M., Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel, the President of the Guzarat Provincial Congress Committee, came to the Ashram from the city (Ahmedabad) with a telegram, and roused Mahatmaji from his sleep. It was a message from Mr. Mahadev Desai. It informed Mahatmaji of the mighty wave of sympathy with Pandit Motilalji, Jawaharlalji and their comrades, that had been sweeping Allahabad. It struck a responsive chord in Mahatmaji's breast, and with great enthusiasm he began a talk on the favourable posture of affairs and about the future programme of his work. The talk roused me from my sleep, and I sat up in my bed. On many a previous occasion, I sat up like this at night, but Mahatmaji had never noticed me, or had never said a word to me about it. But that day his happiness knew no bounds. He said, rather unexpectedly—"Why, Krishnadas? Are you not having sleep?" Ordinarily, during my daily contacts I would find him quite grave and collected, and I was therefore not a little surprised to find him make the somewhat unexpected query. But the kindly tone of those words, and the manner of his asking, told me that the load of his anxiety had somewhat lightened, and I made the modest reply—"No, I was sleeping, and I was roused by your talk." That night I could not sleep any longer; I only tossed about in my bed till quarter past two. The wave of the excitement that was sweeping the country had begun to touch me also, and sway my mind and body. Nevertheless, I tried as far as possible to view things from the standpoint of an impartial observer, and seek to determine my own duty accordingly.

Thus passed the 9th of December. The 10th also was packed with events; but the news that came in the night was quite serious. After the evening prayer, Mahatmaji went to Ahmedabad on some public business. I had gone

to bed early. But I got up at half past ten and found that Mahatmaji had returned from the city, and was in his bed sleeping. A little while after, the Ashram watchman came in with a messenger who had brought two telegrams from the Congress Office in the city. One was from Basanti Devi (Mrs. C. R. Das) saying—"Husband arrested," the other was from Mr. Jamnalal Bajaj. Not more than five minutes after the Congress messenger had left, a Telegraph Office peon put in an appearance. Mahatmaji himself signed his name and took delivery of the telegram. It was from Mrs. Saraladevi from Lahore—"Our house being searched present moment." Ten minutes after this peon had left was ushered in another Telegraph peon. He had brought the following telegram from Mr. Shyamasundar Chakravarty—"Messrs. Das, Azad, Sasmal, Padmaraj, Akram Khan arrested this evening." After this I lost all appetite for sleep. At twelve midnight there arrived from the city Swami Satyadeva, Mr. Mavlankar, then Secretary of the Guzarat Provincial Congress Committee, and Messrs. Dayalji and Kalyanji, two of the leading non-co-operators of Surat. Mahatmaji was sleeping, but being disturbed by their arrival he woke up. They were all eager to have an understanding of the situation as it was rapidly developing from day to day. The discussion continued far into the night.

Thousands of arrests took place all over the country after the arrest of Deshabandhu Das. In the course of a week after that incident, in Bengal alone, the number of arrests went up to about two thousand. In Behar, Mr. Shafi, Babu Janakdhari Prasad, Babu Vindyeshwari Prasad and ten other prominent public men, with about a hundred and fifty volunteers, sought the hospitality of the Government prisons. At Delhi, Mr. Asaf Ali at the head of 54 volunteers surrendered to the police. Khwaja Saheb at Aligarh, Aga Safdar Saheb, Dr. Satyapal, Gurubux Singh and others, all Congress leaders in the Punjab, did not flinch from doing their duty by the country and sacrificing themselves at the call of the Congress. The rank and file were not cowed down because of the arrest and imprisonment of the leaders. In every town in Northern India a regular unending stream of volunteers peacefully flowed

into the gaols by disobeying the police and magisterial orders. The Government and the police were at their wit's end, not knowing what to do with them. About this time, while these arrests were going and hundreds on hundreds of volunteers, both leaders and their followers, were cheerfully offering themselves for arrest, His Excellency the Viceroy, Lord Reading, got "puzzled and perplexed," and in a speech* in Calcutta gave expression to his perplexity in the following words :—

"I confess, when I contemplate the activities of a section of the community, I find myself still, notwithstanding persistent study ever since I have been in India, puzzled and perplexed. I ask myself what purpose is served by flagrant breaches of the law for the purpose of challenging the Government and in order to compel arrest."

Mahatmaji's reply to the Viceroy is to be found in "Young India," and is well worth reproduction here :—

"Bred in the atmosphere of law-courts, Lord Reading finds it difficult to appreciate the peaceful resistance to authority. There are two ways open to the people,—the way of armed rebellion, and the way of peaceful revolt. Non-co-operators have chosen, some out of weakness, some out of strength, the way of peace, i.e., of non-violent suffering. If the people are not with them, they have at least the satisfaction of not having sold their freedom."†

* This speech was delivered by Lord Reading as a joint reply to addresses presented by the British Indian Association, Calcutta, and the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce. It was delivered in the second week of December, 1921.

† "Young India," December 15, 1921.

CHAPTER XV.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS AND MAHATMAJI'S JOY—I.

On the arrest of Deshabandhu Das on 10th December (1921) Mr. Shyamasunder Chakravarty was elected to take his place as President of the Congress and Khilafat Committees of Bengal. In a letter to Shyamasunder Babu about this time, Mahatmaji thus expressed his view of the political situation of Bengal.

"It is a delightful thing to hear of these arrests; two things are needed to ensure early establishment of Swaraj—a ceaseless stream of civil resisters, and a non-violent atmosphere. I hope that Bengal will lead in both these matters."

On 11th December, news was received at the Ashram that Mahatmaji's eldest son Harilal had been arrested in Calcutta. Mahatmaji was very pleased to hear the news, and at once sent a wire to Harilal expressing his satisfaction. Simultaneously, he sent the following urgent message to Devadas, his youngest son, at Allahabad—"You may court arrest any time—Bapu." The news of Harilal's arrest threw the whole Ashram into a state of joyous excitement, and men and women without exception were longing for the opportunity to offer themselves for arrest. It was clear to me that Mahatmaji's precept and example had driven out of the minds of the Ashram people all fear of gaol-life. Ba's example was inspiring. With justifiable pride she said—"I also have done three months with hard labour in South Africa," and then she described the kind of work that she had to do in the gaol. In the course of my narrative, I have had occasion to mention the name of Professor Kripalani, the Director of the Gandhi Ashram, Benares. With regard to him we received a Benares telegram saying—"Professor Kripalani with fifteen Ashramites arrested—all calm." Reading the wire Mahatmaji exclaimed—"Good, just the thing expected." On the 14th morning, Dr. Mahmud, Secretary to the Central Khilafat

Committee, came from Bombay and described to Mahatmaji the enthusiasm and determination that had been in evidence on all sides, and with feelings of unbounded joy summed up the situation in the country by saying.—“Our victory is certain, there is no more cause for fear. By God’s providence the Government have set their foot in the trap, and they are bound either to bend or to break.”

On the 15th, Mahatmaji was taken by surprise to learn from a wire from Benares intimating the arrest of Mr. Bhagavan Das, a leading citizen and distinguished leader of the place. Mahatmaji, however, felt happy at the news. For, he sent immediately the following wire to Mr. Shri Prakasa, Babu Bhagavan Das’s son—“Hearty congratulations. Was totally unprepared for such consummation—Gandhi.” Commenting on this incident he said—“If the Government continues in its mad career at this rate who knows, just as the battle of Kurukshetra was over in eighteen days, that this righteous war might not be similarly finished in eighteen days.”

A telegram from Mr. Rajendra Prasad, non-co-operating leader of Behar, was received on the same date, 15th, in which he reported—“Government proclaimed volunteer corps unlawful. Shafi, Janakdhari, and fifty volunteers arrested for disregarding proclamation. We propose that Haque, Brijkishore, Deepnarayan, myself should enlist. Wire instructions Chapra—Rajendra Prasad.”

Mahatmaji’s reply was as follows.—“Do enlist leaving instructions (to) young, reliable men ensuring non-violence—Gandhi.”

On the same date, 15th, Mahatmaji received a wire from Salem from the Congress President of the year (1921), Mr. Vijayraghavachary. He informed Mahatmaji of the great excitement among the people on account of the promulgation of Criminal Law Amendment Act in Madras. Mr. Rajagopalchary having informed Mahatmaji from Vellore that the case against him had been adjourned for a few days, Mahatmaji gave him the following reply by wire.—“Good. Hope you will get maximum penalty—Gandhi.” On the same date, Mahatmaji was engaged in drafting the main resolution that was placed before the

Ahmedabad Congress. In this draft he recast and enlarged the old volunteer's pledge adopted by the Working Committee at their Bombay sitting (23rd November). Copies of the resolution were, according to his instruction, despatched by us to all the principal non-co-operation leaders of the country.

A very strong rumour had spread in Ahmedabad on the 16th that Mahatmaji had been arrested. So in the evening many anxious people visited the Ashram with a view to get first-hand information. We were also given to understand that the rumour of arrest had caused a sudden fall to the tune of ten rupees in the piece-goods market. The influence of the Congress at the time was so great that it swayed the money-market, which remained unsteady for some days. According to the brokers of Bombay, so we were told, the public had been eagerly on the look out as to what decision might be taken by the ensuing session of the Congress at Ahmedabad.

CHAPTER XVI.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS AND MAHATMAJI'S JOY—II.

Meanwhile the co-operating politicians of India, known as the Moderate Party of India, found themselves in a very difficult and delicate position. They saw that the Government had been pursuing a mad career of repression, and could hardly justify a policy of keeping quiet over the affair. They saw also the unbending attitude of the non-co-operators, who had shown themselves capable of a degree of self-suffering which the Moderate leaders had hardly anticipated. So alike, as they thought, in the interests of the Government as of the non-co-operators, they started negotiations on their own account to bring some sort of compromise or reconciliation between the two contending parties. A considerable portion of these Moderates had also got frightened at the unprecedented awakening among the masses, and the degree of excitement prevailing among them. A certain landowner from Jubbulpur (C. P.) wired—"Situation extremely grave. Both sides equally determined. Undesirable happenings not unlikely. Your responsibility serious. Round Table Conference advisable. Viceroy also requested to hear."

To this Mahatmaji replied as follows—"Non-co-operators purely 'on (the) defensive. No Conference can do good unless Government penitent and prepared (to) recognise supremacy (of) public opinion—Gandhi."

Another well-known gentleman wired to Mahatmaji from the Punjab—"Punjab situation extremely serious. Going immediately Calcutta."

The above gives but a faint picture of the panic and anxiety that had seized the Moderate politicians and their following. On the other hand, and in sharp contrast, we find the general body of the people intoxicated with the hope of winning Swaraj under Mahatmaji's leadership by means of uttermost sacrifice and suffering. It is beyond my power to give any adequate description of the wave of

hope, enthusiasm and joy that had been sweeping through the country. The fear of imprisonment had taken leave of the hearts of the people. Not only that, but gaol-life had become a mark of honour, and a coveted object to most. The late Maulana Abdul Bari, great Moslem divine of Lucknow, had sent from that town a long telegram to Mahatmaji on 15th December describing the political situation in that part of the country. The exuberance of hope and joy that flowed through the whole of that telegram showed the prevailing feeling at the time. The full text of the wire was as follows—"Have come back from Hyderabad to-day. I was very much pleased by the victorious spirit of Maulavi Salamatullah and my other dearest Hindu-Muslim friends. I congratulate you on their arrest. We are proud of the citizens of Lucknow and Allahabad for their patience, tolerance, orderly manner, unity of action, and obedience to Congress orders. The correct report about hartal, both in Lucknow and Allahabad, is that it was complete, and perfect non-violence prevailed. Have just seen Pandit Motilalji and Maulana Salamatullah with their comrades in jail. All are cheerful and happy. Have just heard about your son's arrest. Hearty congratulations. Hopeful sign."

Mahatmaji's reply was couched in a vein of thankfulness to God at the hopefulness of the situation—"We have every reason (to) praise God for His mercy. Hope you are well."

To propitiate the great gods, Yagnas or ceremonies of sacrifices are to be performed—such is the teaching of Hinduism. The greater the innocence of the sacrifices offered, the greater and speedier the result. The way of winning over your adversary by means of sacrifice and suffering is the great teaching of the Yagnas. Mahatmaji was beginning to feel that the end of the great ceremony of "sacrifice" or Yagna he had inaugurated as High-priest for the liberation of the Motherland was drawing near. To hasten the result, he had been thinking of offering to the wrath of the Government some spotless "sacrifices." In this connection he used to say every now and then—"Why is not Mahadev getting arrested? It will give me the

greatest pleasure to hear that he has been arrested, and he will have some rest." So also when news came that Mr. Jairamdas of Sindh had been arrested on the 20th December, Mahatmaji felt exceedingly happy. On the same date, Mahadev wired to say that the security of the "Independent" had been forfeited, and so if Mahatmaji agreed he would bring out a daily hand-written "Independent," although he was expecting his own arrest every moment. Overjoyed at the news, Mahatmaji sent the following immediate reply to Mr. Desai—

"Bravo, get as many volunteer copyists as possible. Multiply on Roneo. Give briefest news and informing article. Daily volunteers to sell paper—Bapu."

CHAPTER XVII.

COUNTRY UNDERGOING PRACTICAL TRAINING IN SATYAGRAHA.

Mahatmaji's joy and exaltation of spirits following on the arrest and imprisonment of all the great leaders of the country revealed to us almost at a flash the workings of his mind, and the greatness of his character. The willing sacrifice offered in their persons by the leaders was, in Mahatmaji's eyes, the most enduring contribution to the national cause. The example they set of the spirit of sacrifice, fearlessness, and courage was beginning to become contagious, and that spirit must become part of the national character, if the battle of Swaraj was to be won. Hitherto the terrors of gaol-life had cowed down the people. But the example of fearlessness set by the leaders drove away fear from the hearts of their followers. The people had hitherto borne with bowed heads tyranny, repression or insult heaped on them; but now the time had come for them to stand with their heads erect, and not take things lying down. The awakened consciousness of self-respect had become general and the humiliation of foreign domination had become so intolerable that even ladies came out of their seclusion to take part in the campaign of freedom led by Mahatmaji. Above all, the people had so far entered into the secret of the kind of fight for which Mahatmaji stood that they were able to stand their ground unperturbed, and were not thrown off their balance, keeping order and peace even when their honoured leaders, and what was more, well-known and honoured ladies were being led to gaol. From Mahatmaji's point of view, this was a great advance on the country's position, such as he had found it during the Rowlatt agitation days, when the populace, unable to bear the spectacle of Mahatma Gandhi being arrested, had indulged in unrestrained excesses. But now when honoured leaders were being clapped in gaol, the example of self-restraint which the people set was to

Mahatmaji an asset of incalculable value. For if the battle of Swaraj was to be won by Satyagraha, or the power of non-violence, this discipline of self-restraint through which the people were being put under the political violence of Lord Reading's Government in the sacred name of Law and Order, was daily strengthening the power of the people to fight to the finish, and correspondingly weakening the bureaucracy. By declaring the volunteer organisations as unlawful, and inaugurating a policy of wholesale and universal repression, the bureaucracy had forged new methods of laying violent hands on popular freedom ; but the net result of it was an increase of the people's strength and their determination of will, and a gradual decline of the power of the bureaucracy. Mahatmaji was, therefore, feeling that if after this he should himself conduct his peaceful disobedience campaign in some circumscribed area, the people, who had gone through this sort of practical training in non-violence, would be able to give a good account of themselves, and make all violent efforts of the bureaucracy nugatory. The chains of Governmental law would be broken, and the chains of tyrannical violence would stand unmasked.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SETTLEMENT THROUGH ARBITRAMENT OF THE SWORD.

Thus, with the growth of organised lawlessness by the Government, and a corresponding growth in the disciplined power and determination of the people to offer a peaceful resistance to such lawlessness, the issues were being daily and hourly joined. And as the struggle went on intensifying Mahatmaji's feeling was that success was drawing nearer and nearer. Was this the secret of Mahatmaji's joy? Was Mahatmaji estimating the nation's good and evil in terms of victory or defeat in this struggle? Ordinarily, wherever there is a conflict of interest between two parties, victory means only gain achieved by one party, followed by, or resulting in, loss or destruction of the other side; and *vice versa*. The ordinary man is anxious, above all to add to his own happiness and prosperity, and, if necessary, at the expense of others; to establish his views and opinions as against the views and opinions of his adversary; and also generally not merely to rest content with mere self-preservation, *i.e.*, the maintenance of mere self-interest, but in addition to attempt to aggrandise himself at the expense of others, that is, by means of exploitation of his weaker neighbours. The ordinary conflicts of the world, whether between man and man, or between nation and nation, generally take their rise from this desire for self-aggrandisement, this desire to exploit others, wherever possible. Not self-realisation but self-aggrandisement, whether individual, racial, national, creedal or communal, is the real object of many a fight, although waged in the name of Religion, Truth, Empire, Nationalism, Law, Order, and so forth. And when the real object is self-aggrandisement, however camouflaged, the end is sought to be attained by whatever means possible, whether it be force or fraud, whether it be terrorism and open war, or diplomatic cunning, and setting class against class. The need for resorting to violence for purposes of self-aggrandisement is thus ex-

plained, and Mahatmaji's creed of Ahimsa or non-violence, which is synonymous with self-suffering, is aimed at destroying the spirit of self-aggrandisement, which makes for all conflict.

The English having obtained victory in such a conflict have succeeded in establishing their supremacy in India, with the result that the interests of the children of the soil are necessarily subordinated and sacrificed to the interests of the ruling race. Here in the case of the English, the interests are those not of self-preservation, but of self-aggrandisement, which leads to exploitation. This exploitation by political masters naturally leads to the development of a sense of wrong in the victim when the latter begins to develop a sense of self-respect. Whence racial hatred and bitterness makes its appearance. The policy of British national self-aggrandisement at the expense of India has gradually roused in the Indian people a sense of collective consciousness, and a sense of collective wrong. This clash between the two mutually antagonistic national selves is gradually being developed into race-hatred.

The Indian people although roused to a consciousness of being the victim of wrong have not been able to vindicate their national self-interests in the usual violent way. But this resort to violent means even by way of self-preservation, although justified and justifiable, cannot be held as solving the whole problem. Judged by worldly standards, it is certainly not wrong to defend by force of arms one's individual or national interests as against the aggressor. Nevertheless, it is held that resort to force is to be avoided, if the dispute could be amicably settled, say, by means of a conference or by arbitration, or by reference to a law court. For the fundamental defect from which the settlement of conflicts by the arbitrament of the sword labours is that the conflict is not finally set at rest. Conflicts settled by a resort to arms know no ending, and cannot be ultimately kept within legitimate bounds. The adversary or enemy, even if he is in the wrong, may be kept down through coercion, but is not converted. The spirit of wrong-doing persists in him, and hence his submission to the logic of force implies and involves no "change of heart," no sort of

"penitence" for the wrong inflicted by him on his victim. Therefore, from the point of view of theory as well as practice, it is clear that force is ultimately no remedy.*

* The following pronouncement by a living English authority is worth reproducing.—

"Has war ever settled everything? Has not every war, on the contrary, left behind it seeds of further war?

"Consider only the wars of the past hundred years. In the Crimea, to use the phrase of a Conservative Prime Minister (Lord Salisbury), we 'put our money on the wrong horse'? When the Italians threw off the yoke of the Austrians in 1859 they were seeking political liberty. Look at Italy to-day! What resulted from the victory of Prussia over Austria in 1866? The aggrandisement of Prussia, which was thereby encouraged to take up the foolish challenge of France in 1870. From that war, the Franco-German, came the causes of the Great War (1914-1918); and from the legacies of hate and resentment left by the Great War will come another unless we resolve to have done with the accursed foolish thing. For these four years of insanity have settled nothing."

CHAPTER XIX.

SETTLEMENT THROUGH SATYAGRAHA.

But there may be another class of fight against the tyrant or exploiter which does not suffer from the limitations of a settlement effected through the arbitrament of the sword. This is the fight of Satyagraha ; the fight *par excellence*, victory in which makes it possible for the down-trodden and the oppressed to rescue themselves from the clutches of the strong and the powerful, while at the same time turning away the power-intoxicated tyrant from his vicious ways—the way of self-aggrandisement and oppression. The fight is throughout peaceful on the part of the victim of tyranny, but equally determined, he being prepared to suffer the utmost at the hands of the violent adversary, but never to yield under his blows. This fight is brought to a finish when Truth and Justice are installed in their proper place, and at the conclusion the erstwhile enemy does no longer remain an enemy, but undergoes a change of heart and becomes a friend.

In Mahātmaji's opinion, a Satyagrahi will engage in a non-violent fight with an oppressor for the preservation of his manhood, for the triumph of Truth and Justice, for the maintenance or assertion of what he considers to be his legitimate rights and interests. It is the cause of Truth and Justice which he has undertaken, and which might not be allowed to suffer at his hands. And, therefore, if he is able to vindicate such a cause, he would also be able to turn the evil-doer away from the path of evil, and effect a change of heart in him. Therefore, while carrying on the fight in such a spirit of righteousness, the civil resister, without wavering or cowering before the evil-doer, would be able to stand all the blows that may be hurled at him, and would even be able to lay down his life for the cause. Such is the kind of fight waged by a Satyagrahi. As the fight proceeds, the fury of the oppressor instead of abating would go on increasing ; and then would come the testing

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time for the Satyagrahi. If at this critical stage, the Satyagrahi without getting demoralised, or getting excited or provoked into retaliating measures, should make it his business to bear the full force of the onslaught, then the hour of his victory would be drawing nearer and nearer. And this victory would mean the final assertion of his manhood, the triumph of Truth and Justice, and the redemption of the oppressor. But unless the soldier in the cause of Truth and Justice is thoroughly trained and disciplined in the art and practice of a non-violent warfare, he is bound to go under. For it is to be remembered that if without cheerfully submitting to the oppression, the oppressed begins to bottle up his rage, and his spirit of violence within his heart, the oppressor would always remain afraid of a future retaliation, and there would be no reconciliation of hearts, such as would prevent a fresh outbreak of the struggle. Thus oppression and retaliation would go on in an unending vicious circle. On the other hand, if the fight is conducted in a non-violent spirit by the victim; in other words, if without cowering or wavering the latter goes on putting up a valiant, determined fight, defying the worst excesses of the oppressor, the oppressor himself would ^ver, feeling himself helpless. He would begin to feel like Lord Reading "puzzled and perplexed"; and when the critical stage is over, when the worst excesses of the tyrant had left the hearts of the victim unsubdued, the time for reconciliation would have arrived. Then it would have become easy and possible for the evil-doer to desist from the path of evil and give his proper homage to Truth and Justice. The power of suffering by the Satyagrahi would have then vindicated itself. It would then have presented before the evil-doer a new situation which would affect the psychology, the heart and the conscience of the evil-doer in almost a revolutionary manner.* This kind of victory may fitly be styled "super-

* Read in this connection the following pronouncement by Mahatmaji.—

"The Viceroy (Lord Reading) was confused when he said that Swaraj would have come from the Parliament unless it came by the sword. But His Excellency is unused to any substitute for the sword. He will soon learn that there is a better and more effective

victory", for while ordinarily a victory involves the defeat of one of the contending parties, this kind of victory does not lead to the loss, humiliation, or defeat of either party.

To express more fully the implications of this type of victory, Mahatmaji generally made use of the words "penitence" and "change of heart" of the evil-doer. It is a matter for regret that Mahatmaji's use of these terms led not only the Government but also some of our leaders of the moderate school to charge him with a desire to "humiliate" the Government. But they ought to have understood that the Government could have no truer friends than those, who, by quietly submitting to all the punishments that were inflicted upon them, were trying for no other result than rousing and quickening the conscience of their rulers so that they might feel what course of grievous wrong they had been pursuing in regard to the Indian people.

substitute for the sword, and that is Civil Disobedience. It is daily becoming clear that Civil Disobedience will afford the course of suffering through which India must pass before she comes to her own' ("Young India" 5th January, 1922). And again,—“The late President Kruger when he with a handful of his undisciplined countrymen, hurled his ultimatum against the British Empire, said he would stagger humanity. He meant that he would sacrifice every Boer, man, woman and child and leave not a single Boer heart to subdue. And England yielded when she was tired of “concentration camps in which Boer women and children died like flies. I know for certain that it is not legal subtleties, discussions on academic justice or resolutions of Councils and Assemblies that will give us what we want. We shall have to stagger humanity even as South Africa and Ireland have been obliged to. Only instead of repeating South African and Irish histories, Non-co-operators are learning from the living examples of these two nations the art of spilling their own blood without spilling that of their opponents. Councils are no factories for stout hearts, and freedom is miasma without stout hearts to defend it.” (“Young India”, 15th December, 1921)

CHAPTER XX.

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SECRET OF MAHATMAJI'S JOY.

Mahatmaji was, therefore, filled with joy at the news of the arrest of the leaders on all sides. Here for the first time, without his having to work for it, appeared before him a situation so devoutly wished for by a Satyagrahi. The hour had struck, and the Non-co-operators must not be found wanting at this critical juncture. Therefore, how to keep the movement in the straight but narrow path of non-violence, so that they might neither cower nor waver, nor get provoked into violence,—such became the object of his effort and care. Therefore, at this time when the Government had been hurling their shafts at the non-co-operating resisters, Mahatmaji felt it necessary to reiterate and re-emphasise the full meaning of warfare by way of Satyagraha in words full of strength, and full of hope. Thus:—

"In the moment of our trial and our triumph let me declare my faith. I believe in loving my enemies; I believe in non-violence as the only remedy open to the Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians, and the Jews of India. I believe in the power of suffering to meet the stoniest heart. We must by our conduct demonstrate to every Englishman that he is as safe in the remotest corner of India as he professes to feel behind the machine gun.

"By non-violent non-co-operation we seek to conquer the wrath of the English administrators and their supporters. We must love them, and pray to God that they might have wisdom to see what appears to be their error. It must be the prayer of the strong, and not of the weak. In our strength must we humble ourselves before our Maker."*

From what we have seen, the war of Satyagraha is won only by the pressure of innocent suffering and determined

* "Young India", December 8th, 1921.

opposition on the part of the Satyagrahi soldiers. Victory attained by such means could alone lead to the redemption of the wrong-doer through a moral change of outlook, a change of heart, and a corresponding penitence. Therefore, in order to achieve a victory of this kind over the rulers, it would not do to enter the lists with the fire of violence raging in one's breast against them. One might, indeed, for a time break out into violence; but it is certain that that could not stand a prolonged onslaught of violence from the side of the Government. Either one would waver and cower under the repeated blows, or would be provoked to adopt retaliation. In either case, the battle of Satyagraha is lost. Mahatmaji, therefore, repeatedly said that those who were given to indulging and nursing in their hearts thoughts of violence, and feelings of racial hatred against the rulers, were unfit to be enlisted as Satyagrahis, and must retire from volunteer organisations. His invitation was only to those who were prepared to undertake a clean fight. Hence he wrote at the time (Y. I. 15th December, 1921):—

“Let the purest-minded become volunteers and be imprisoned. The instructions of the Working Committee in this matter must be strictly followed. The purest-minded alone are fit to go to gaol as civil resisters, and no other. If we have been lax hitherto, let us be religiously strict in our selection. I fervently hope that those who have not clean minds, or who do not believe in non-violence or Swadeshi or any vital part of non-co-operation, will refrain from applying. They will serve by their abstention.”

Thus, Mahatmaji was getting convinced that the example of sacrifice of the leaders was sowing the seeds of Satyagraha in the hearts of the people. He also felt that the march of repression was testing the fitness of the country for Swaraj. For, to the extent that the spirit of self-sacrifice and the power of innocent suffering and of determined resistance would dominate the hearts of the people, to that extent would the country be purified and advanced, and become capable of wielding the most powerful, as well as the cleanest, of political weapons. And so Mahatmaji's conviction was daily growing that the auspicious moment

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had been fast approaching when it would be possible to place before the sceptical world the example of political Swaraj won by the power of non-violence, and of the moral conversion of the wrong-doer from the ways of violence to the ways of peace.

PART II

CHAPTER I.

MODERATES FAVOUR NEGOTIATION WITH GOVERNMENT.

The general body of the people were not cowed down by the bureaucratic campaign of repression, although the strain was getting heavier every day. That strain was all the easier for them to bear because of the spirit of undaunted resistance displayed by the workers and leaders. The joy and enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds at the sight of a regular campaign of defensive individual civil disobedience carried on by the Non-co-operators in assertion of their fundamental rights of free association and free meeting.

But the situation from the Moderate point of view was anything but desirable. For the orgy of bureaucratic lawlessness on the one hand, and the determined resistance of the Non-co-operators on the other, both pursued on an organised scale, represented a posture of affairs too painful and embarrassing to the Moderate mind. For the whole political lives of politicians of the Moderate school of thought had been spent in co-operating with the Government, and expressing their dissent, where that was unavoidable, by means only of wordy protests or formal petitions. But here the protests of the Non-co-operators went beyond words and petitions, thus giving the Government an opportunity of making the people feel the edge of the Government sword. This, of course, had the effect of showing the Government up and exposing its true character. But the barbarities and illegalities of the Government methods directed against the Non-co-operators were of such outrageous character that they shocked the Moderate conscience, the conscience of the non-official protagonists of Law and Order.

Nor could the Moderates countenance the method of agitation for which the Non-co-operators stood. For Mahatmaji's programme of direct action, however dignified, as they thought, with the epithet of non-violent, they had

a rooted disbelief. The belief ingrained in their nature in a constitutionalism, which would secure for India her enfranchisement at the hands of British masters, made them look askance at Mahatmaji's brand of politics. India must and could make political progress along lines laid down by the British Government from time to time, and ultimately achieve co-equal partnership with them,—such was their fundamental creed. And the idea of flying in the face of the Government, even when the latter was most arbitrary and tyrannical, was altogether foreign to their scheme of political thought. Thus, the inauguration of a programme of direct action (however non-violent), was in their eyes not only unconstitutional, but also revolutionary, in character.

The constitutional incapacity of the Moderates to appreciate the non-co-operationist method of political agitation was strengthened by another circumstance. In their view, the need for non-co-operation had not arisen. The country was in no such desperate plight as to make the adoption of a policy of withdrawal of co-operation from the Government an absolute necessity. The orthodox method of seeking to influence the Government by means of argumentative protests, although accompanied by co-operation, had not in their view yet proved to be a broken reed.

But above all, the Moderate Party had become nervous at the general awakening among the masses, as the result of the non-co-operation movement. And so when Mahatmaji had begun seriously to prepare the country for a campaign of mass Civil Disobedience, consternation seized them. They had not the courage to take a defiant stand against Mahatmaji and the prevailing public opinion. For that would have utterly discredited them in the eyes of the general body of the people, and ensured their extinction as an independent political party, able and competent to influence public opinion.

The position of the Moderates, therefore, under the circumstances was one of extreme delicacy, difficulty, and embarrassment. What line of action were they to pursue at this critical juncture of the country's affairs?

Could they lend their countenance to the orgy of lawlessness organised by the Government, and their policy of throwing thousands upon thousands of Non-co-operators into prison? They could not; and the Government noted it, and made a grievance of it. "Rally the Moderates," as against the Indian extremists of the day, was the famous cry of Lord Morley. The same policy was continued throughout and had proved successful. And so when the movement of non-co-operation reared its head, the Government belief in the same policy led to the application of the same doctrine to combat non-co-operation. The Moderates had hitherto willingly lent themselves to the success of that policy. But now they received a shock at the barbarities and illegalities committed by the Government in pursuance of a policy of ruthless repression. Again, although in sympathy with the Government in their difficulties, they felt themselves unable to witness with composure the sight of thousands upon thousands of Non-co-operators being cast into gaol under circumstances for which they had not bargained. But could they pursue a policy of active sympathy with their non-co-operating countrymen, the victims of Governmental lawlessness? They could not. That was another source of embarrassment. For, then their action would have been construed as identification with the non-co-operation ideal and the programme of non-co-operation. In the circumstances, as a middle course, and also with a view to safeguard their political existence as a party, the policy that commended itself to them was the policy of playing the role of intermediaries, *i.e.*, of peace-makers and negotiators between the Government and their non-co-operating countrymen.

The political situation as it had developed about the middle of December, 1921, was at the time ably reviewed by that leading Moderate daily, "The Leader", of Allahabad. Here are certain extracts from it which give a sort of picture of the state of things, and give expression also to the reaction produced by Governmental policy on the Moderate mind.

"The general political situation in the country is overcast. The news of the arrest of prominent non-co-operating

leaders and workers is coming. The list is swelling. One thing the Government should never forget in its consciousness of power is that there is a general awakening of the people and that no section of the population, whether it belongs to the category of Co-operators or Non-co-operators, or Constitutionals, or Direct Actionist is free from the stirring of heart; and that behind the movement of Mr. Gandhi is the support of an overwhelming section of the population in various degrees; and that probably few will welcome the striking down of what may be described as the militant arm of Indian nationalism. Let it be controlled, guided, and restrained by suitable means. But any attempt to crush it out of existence by physical force would end in dismal failure, and will recoil in a variety of ways in the field of government. Force can overawe a people for sometime, but it cannot be a lasting remedy for political ills."

And, again,—“We have ever stood for peace and goodwill all round; and we have opposed the non-co-operation movement because we feel that it was not paving the way to peace. But the acceptance in deadly earnest of its challenge of war by Government means the clash of two unreasoning forces which must lead to a great tragedy unless powerful intervention comes from some unexpected quarter and converts the challenge to a handshake. Before the strife proceeds further a supreme effort should be made to avert the calamity that threatens the country.

CHAPTER II

MAHATMAJI'S READING OF THE SITUATION.

It is clear that between Mahatmaji and the Moderates there were fundamental differences of outlook in political matters. But hitherto there had been no occasion for direct conflict. But with the advent of the N. C. O. movement they became painfully manifest. We require to understand how the same set of political facts affected Mahatmaji and the Moderate political school in such contradictory manner. The fundamental differences may be shortly stated. The Moderate politicians as a class had an implicit belief that as a political weapon the method of direct action could be replaced by the method of negotiations with Government. Secondly, according to them, the method of non-violent action pitted against the method of organised State violence (when the Government chose to be aggressive, and to lend itself to methods of lawlessness), involved too much sacrifice and suffering for the protagonists of direct action. Hence, a shorter way to success was necessary, and must be preferred. Therefore, when Lord Reading, as the Moderates thought, was prepared to hold, or could be persuaded by them to hold a Round Table Conference, and as the whole case for which the Non-co-operators had been fighting could be made the subject-matter of negotiations at that Conference, it were folly not to call off the boycott of the Prince's visit, and suspend all "essential non-co-operation activities," which meant all preparations for the inauguration of mass Civil Disobedience intended to enforce the Triple Demand of the Congress.*

Mahatmaji's case, however, was that all the Moderate leaders' belief in a Round Table Conference under the benevolent leadership of the Viceroy had its root in a corresponding belief in the bona fides of Lord Reading and his Government. Here, he fundamentally differed from the Moderates.

* This refers to the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, and the settlement of the question of Swaraj for India.

In the first place, Mahatmaji had ample reasons to distrust Lord Reading and his Government. His Excellency had persisted in bringing over to India His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in spite of the growing unrest and discontent in the country, and against the declared wishes of the Indian people as represented by the Congress. Further, Mahatmaji and Congressmen saw that "under cover of the Prince's visit, Lord Reading wanted to make the hold of the rulers tighter and to demonstrate that under their benign administration the whole of India was happy and contented."* "If his Royal Highness came or could come without official patronage and the protecting wings of the Government of the day, Mahatmaji would extend the heartiest welcome to him. But being the heir to a constitutional monarch, the Prince's movements would be regulated and dictated by the ministers, no matter how much the dictations may be concealed beneath diplomatically polite language."† Mahatmaji's distrust of Lord Reading and his Government is further expressed in the following trenchant criticism of their conduct—"You cannot have it both ways. It is true that under a constitutional monarchy, the Royalty was above politics. But you cannot send the Prince on a political visit for the purpose of making a political capital out of him, and then complain that those who will not play your game do not know constitutional usage. The Prince's visit is not for pleasure. The wish is to consolidate and strengthen a power that spells mischief for India. With the knowledge that India was bleeding at heart, the Government of India should have told His Majesty's ministers that the moment was inopportune for sending the Prince. It is adding insult to injury to bring the Prince and through his visit to steal honours and further prestige for a Government that deserves to be dismissed with disgrace. The ministers and the Indian Government show their disloyalty by making the Prince a cat'spaw of their deep political game."‡ How deep-rooted was Mahatmaji's distrust of Lord Reading and his Government may be illustrated by the following further

* "Young India," July 21, 1921.

† "Young India," August 4, 1920.

‡ "Young India," August 4, 1920.

exposure of the constitutional bogey trotted out by the Viceroy in defence of his conduct :—

"I repeat that Non-co-operators have nothing against the Prince as a man. But he cannot be divested of the office he holds. Whilst it is true that the King and his heirs do not actively meddle in the affairs of the State (which is a convenience for the State), he is as effective a representative of the existing system of Government as the most meddlesome Prime Minister or Viceroy. I am disposed to think that as a supporter of the institution he is more effective by reason of his isolation. If the Prince comes, he will not come to bless the Non-co-operators or the cause, but to sing the song of praise for a Government which is responsible for the dishonour of the Punjab, for breach of faith with the Mussalmans, for forcing the drink traffic on India, for impoverishing her, and for so emasculating her that she almost thinks that she must remain in slavery for an unthinkable time. In my humble opinion the projected visit will be an insult added to injury."*

And, again, apart from the political object of the Prince's visit, was not the *malafides* of the Government proved to the hilt when they sought to introduce a reign of lawlessness in order to make the visit serve its object? Was not this, argued Mahatmaji, an additional indication of sin on the part of Lord Reading's Government, which as events proved, shook the faith of even the Co-operating Moderates, and the ardent constitutionalists, in the Government. "The chosen leaders of the people," says Mahatmaji writing about this time,† "are being put away so that the latter may accept the lead of the Government, and so that there may be no hartal on the day of the Prince's entry into the various provinces." And that prince of Moderates, the great upholder of Law and Order, the Rt. Hon'ble Srinivasa Shastry, had to confess the very same thing at a great Liberal Conference convened at Bombay.‡ It must, therefore, be admitted that Mahatmaji's utter dis-

* "Young India," 6th July, 1921.

† "Young India," 8th December, 1921.

‡ On 6th May, 1922.

belief in the sincerity of Lord Reading and his Government was thoroughly well-founded.

Therefore, on all these grounds, and especially on the ground of the suppression of the primary right of free association and free meeting by Lord Reading, and of the orgy of organised lawlessness that followed in its wake, Mahatmaji felt that the Government of Lord Reading was thoroughly insincere and aggressively hostile to the people, and that, therefore, negotiations with that Government, as suggested by the Moderates, were bound to prove abortive, if not worse.

CHAPTER III.

MAHATMAJI TACKLES THE MODERATES.

Thus, the political situation became complicated. Between the Government and the Non-co-operators headed and led by Mahatma Gandhi, there interposed a third party—the party of the Moderate politicians. As we have seen, the latter party felt themselves out of tune with both the Government's, and the Non-co-operator's methods; and they intervened in order that the war may not be carried to the bitter end, resulting either in the overthrow of one or the other of the combatants, or in a state of disorder and confusion in the country. The Moderate leaders knew that they had no real hold over the Government; but they allowed themselves to believe that if they could bring sufficient pressure to bear upon Mahatmaji, it was just possible that he might forego his policy of a stand-up fight with the Government of Lord Reading, and pursue the more peaceful and less hazardous path of negotiations with the Government. Not "Direct Action" but "Negotiations" was their slogan. For in their view, Mahatmaji's object could be achieved by the less arduous path of overtures. Their belief was that Lord Reading could be won over to the idea of a settlement through a Round Table Conference; and the only question was whether Mahatma Gandhi could be persuaded to give up his fighting attitude and meet the Government half-way.

The protagonists of a Round Table Conference, however, did not find their task too easy for them when they seriously came to tackle it. They discovered to their dismay that Mahatmaji had begun to distrust the Viceroy's professions of sympathy. They found also to their dismay that although in Mahatmaji's view the promoters of the scheme of negotiations were thoroughly sincere, he had no doubt in his mind that they were on the wrong track, and pursuing a wrong, and even mischievous, policy. Mahatmaji was satisfied that all negotiations with Lord Reading would

in the end prove abortive. Mahatmaji's clear conviction was that the Government of Lord Reading and not the Non-co-operators were on the war-path. The Government were the aggressors, and the Non-co-operators were on the defensive. Therefore, the Government was suspect; and Mahatmaji's view was that unless the promoters of the negotiations were not sufficiently circumspect, they would be easily outmanoeuvred by the Government and made to play the latter's game.

All the same Mahatmaji did not object to a Round Table Conference, if Lord Reading wanted one; or if the Moderates could persuade the Viceroy to agree to it. But if he agreed to the holding of a Conference, he must do nothing that would jeopardise the interests of the country. In the first place, he would willingly attend such a Conference, whatever its worth, in his individual capacity. But he must not commit the Congress or the general body of Non-co-operators before-hand to any resolutions of the conference. There was danger of the Non-co-operators playing into the hands of the Government, if they accepted such a conference on their part. Mahatmaji argued within himself in this wise:—"The calling off of the hartal on the occasion of the Prince's visit was the first thing on which Lord Reading had set his heart. If he succeeded in breaking the back of the Congress boycott of the Prince's visit, he would have succeeded in the first round of the game. The promulgation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act leading to the suspension of the primary right of free association and free meeting, and the orgy of organised lawlessness that followed was intended by Lord Reading to cow down the non-co-operating public into submission, and ensure, if possible, the nullifying of the Congress boycott. If so, would he not be playing the Government's game, if he called off the hartal and suspended all "essential non-co-operation activities"* on the off-chance of an undefined Round Table Conference being held on some future undefined date, and on undefined terms, and on the off-chance also of its not proving abortive? And, lastly, what was

* Namely, preparations for mass Civil Disobedience to enforce the "Triple Demand" of the Congress.

the prospect of the leaders being able to enforce the ultimate terms of settlement, if indeed a settlement was arrived at on paper?’

‘Nor would the withdrawal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which had set the ball rolling, be any real gain to the people, inasmuch as this Act, specially designed to combat a wholly different set of contingencies, was here wrongfully set in motion against the Non-co-operators with a view to demoralise and cow them down into submission. Therefore, before the country could commit itself to a Round Table Conference what was absolutely necessary was to be assured that they were not going into Lord Reading’s parlour to be trapped. In other words, the primary question according to Mahatmaji was to test and be assured of the bonafides of Lord Reading’s Government in the first instance. For offers of friendly Conference from the Government, even if the ‘Moderate’ negotiations succeeded in drawing forth such offers, could in the circumstances of the case be mere acts of diplomacy intended to outmanoeuvre both the Moderates and the Non-co-operators.’

Mahatmaji’s distrust of the Government was accentuated by another circumstance. He saw that the Government, although directly guilty of launching the offensive against the Non-co-operators, had no scruples to charge the latter with being the aggressors, and on that plea had called upon them to suspend their activities, although these were wholly defensive in their character and meant to ward off the bureaucratic attacks. If so, what value could one attach to the Governmental professions of friendliness? And what guarantee was there that a Round Table Conference of a wholly undefined character, undefined in respect of time, terms and personnel should not prove a snare and a delusion, after the hartal had been called off, and essential Non-co-operation activities, namely, preparations for the ultimate launching of a campaign of mass Civil Disobedience to enforce the “Triple Demand” of the Congress be suspended? Would that not be playing the Government’s game?

Mahatmaji thus made his position clear; but the

Moderate leaders did not feel quite convinced. Their failure to look at the problem from Mahatmaji's angle was due to the fact that they had no doubt about the bonafides of Lord Reading. Hence the Moderate politicians under the inspiration and leadership of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya tried to bring as much moral pressure on Mahatmaji as possible, in order that he might be brought over to their side, and persuaded to call off the hartal and suspend "essential Non-co-operation activities." But Mahatmaji held his ground ; and his tenacity was misconstrued at the time by the leading Moderate negotiators as amounting almost to unreasonableness and obstinacy. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the next succeeding chapter, when Mahatmaji found that some of his own trusted lieutenants in gaol had taken a mistaken view of the situation, having been won over to the Moderate's point of view, he found that it had become necessary to do something more than merely sayin? 'Nay' to the Moderates. He found it necessary, in fact, to put forward certain proposals or terms of his own to supplement those that had been placed before him. The supplementary terms were intended to test the bonafides of Lord Reading's Government, and if accepted by the latter would have gone a great way to prove that the Government really wanted a settlement. But Lord Reading failed to pass the test, and the negotiations broke down on Mahatmaji's supplementary proposals.

CHAPTER IV.

MAHATMAJI FACES OPPOSITION.

Mahatmaji's refusal to accept the proposals of the Moderate leaders of withdrawing opposition to the Prince's welcome and suspending "essential non-co-operation activities" under certain contingent circumstances made the situation, from the point of view of the Moderates, very acute indeed. Mahatmaji was then at Sabarmati working heart and soul for the success of the Ahmedabad session of the Congress, which was going to be held in less than a fortnight's time. Pandit Malaviyaji, on his part, had come down from Benares to Calcutta, and was busy organising Bengal opinion in favour of an immediate withdrawal of the boycott of the Prince's welcome, pending consideration of vital issues by a Round Table Conference. He interviewed Mr. C. R. Das and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, two of the leading Bengal non-co-operating leaders, who had been arrested and lodged in the Presidency gaol, Calcutta. As the result of conversations with Pandit Malaviya, Mr. Das and Maulana Azad sent from the gaol a joint wire to Mahatmaji at Sabarmati. In that message they pressed Mahatmaji to call-off the boycott on condition of the Government's agreeing in the first place to withdraw the orders under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Act, namely, that had been set in motion to strangle the movement of boycott. In other words, the boycott was to be called off on condition of the release only of those Non-co-operators, who, like Messrs. Das and Azad, had been thrown into the prison ostensibly under that Act. There was also another condition for the lifting of the boycott, namely, that the Government must agree to hold a Round Table Conference with the leaders for the settlement of all outstanding issues. This joint message, proceeding as it did from two of his most trusted and distinguished lieutenants, one a Hindu and the other a Muslim, came as a surprise to Mahatmaji. But he did not swerve an inch

from the position he had taken up, rooted as he was in his belief that the Viceroy's professions of friendliness to the people were a camouflage. But he now clearly saw that among some at least of his trusted and able co-adjutors, there was not the same robust faith as he had in the need for a vigorous and exclusive concentration on the prosecution of the movement. He saw that their faith in negotiations with the Government of Lord Reading was also a factor in the situation. How to win over these lieutenants of his to his own point of view became now a problem with Mahatmaji. He realised that the distinguished authors of the proposal had been labouring under a delusion as to the real purposes of the Government. So in his telegraphic answer he conveyed to them his willingness to call-off the hartal, provided the Government could be made to accept two definite conditions or terms which he formulated, supplementing the conditions laid down in the joint message. These were such as the Viceroy, if he was not in a mood to dictate but genuinely desired to arrive at a settlement with the Non-co-operators as the result of an honest Conference, could have no reasonable ground to reject. These stipulations in Mahatmaji's view, would furnish an acid test of the bonafides of Lord Reading and his Government. Therefore, their rejection by him would be a real eye-opener to those non-co-operating leaders who did not share Mahatmaji's thorough-going distrust of Lord Reading, and who had therefore been insisting on the immediate calling-off of the Prince's boycott with a view to pave the path of negotiations with the Government.

How did Mahatmaji propose to test the bonafides of the Government? Firstly, it was clear to him as noon-day that the withdrawal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, in response to the calling-off of the boycott of the Prince's visit, would be not merely no real proof of the bonafides of the Government, but in the circumstances would be a triumph of a crooked bureaucratic strategy. For the setting in motion of that Act whereby all volunteer organisations were rendered unlawful had aimed at one great objective,—the nullifying of the Congress boycott through the effectual cowing down of the Non-co-operators, and their disbandment and dispersal. That that was the real

objective of the Act, as also the policy of organised lawlessness that followed in its wake, is admitted even by the leading representatives of the Moderate Party. These are the words of the Rt. Hon'ble Srinivasa Shastri* at Bombay addressing a Liberal Conference :—

"He did not think that there was any one there who desired it (the visit of the Prince of Wales) enthusiastically. He certainly did not. He counselled against the visit as long as he could. But the visit came ; and what happened when the boycott of that visit was proclaimed by the Non-co-operators? The result was that the Government in order to make it a success against this opposition had to use all their arms in their control. They used all the repressive laws they could think of. The result was that even the Liberal public and the Moderate party stood out of that co-operation with Government in all that went to maintain law and order for which they had previously pledged their word."†

Therefore, the contingent withdrawal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, contingent, that is, on a corresponding withdrawal of the Congress boycott,—an Act the arbitrary application of which had rendered all lawful volunteer associations unlawful, and which had the distinct political objective of nullifying the Congress boycott as if by a Governmental fiat,—would be triumph of a crooked and cunning official strategy, and never a real proof of the bonafides of the Government.

What then would constitute a real test of the bonafides of the Government? Mahatmaji said that if the Government, who were the real aggressors in their crusade against the Non-co-operators, sincerely desired a settlement by way of a Round Table Conference, they should in the first instance give evidence of that sincerity by not merely agreeing to the release of the Criminal Law Amendment Act prisoners, but also by consenting to the release of other Non-co-operators, who without being guilty of actual

* At present Agent to the Government of India in South Africa.

† Presidential speech at the First Bombay Provincial Liberal Conference held at the Cowasji Jehangir Hall on 6th May, 1922.

violence had been unwarrantably locked up in gaol. If they agreed to that, then, Mahatmaji thought, it could be reasonably argued that the withdrawal of the Congress boycott of the Prince's visit was not the Government's only or primary objective ; but that in addition the Government had undergone a change of heart, and renouncing their attitude of aggression towards the people had become sincerely anxious for a settlement with their representatives.

CHAPTER V.

THE FUTWA PRISONERS.

Among the body of Non-co-operators, who had been thrown into prison without being guilty of violence or incitement to violence, were a certain small number, known as the Futwa prisoners.* On 8th July, 1921, a session of the All-India Khilafat Conference was held at Karachi in Sindh; and amongst those who were present, or took part in the proceedings, were Maulana Mahomed Ali (who presided), Maulana Shaukat Ali, Dr. Kitchlew, and a large body of Ulemas, or Moslem divines, besides a Shankaracharya, i.e., head of well-known Hindu religious organisation or fraternity. A certain Resolution, embodying a declaration of Islamic Law regarding military service under the Government was passed by the Karachi Conference. The result of it was that by the orders of the Bombay Government a certain number of leading Moslems present at the Conference, including Maulanas Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali and Dr. Kitchlew along with the Shankaracharya, were arrested and prosecuted under several sections of the Indian Penal Code. The more serious charges against them, or some of them, including Maulanas Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali, were "criminal conspiracy, promoting enmity against Government and attempting to seduce Moslem troops from their allegiance to the Government." The rest were not so serious, but were minor charges. They were acquitted of all the principal charges; but were found guilty of having committed one or more of the minor offences, and sentenced on 1st November 1921 by the Sessions Court at Karachi to a term of two years imprisonment.

Such is the history of what are known as the Futwa prisoners. They were thrown into prison not for having

* A Futwa is a judicial pronouncement or decree issued by learned Doctors of Islamic Law, known as Ulemas, on the duties of Moslems on particular occasions and under particular circumstances.

committed any actual acts of violence, or having incited others to violence, but for having expressed in terms of Islamic Law a particular view regarding the propriety or otherwise of military service for Moslems in the particular circumstances in which the Indian Moslems had been placed at the time by the acts of the British Government. The effect on the country of the arrest of the Futwa prisoners was instantancous. The offence for which the Ali Brothers, Dr. Kitchlew and their compatriots were then being prosecuted was repeated by thousands of people from a thousand platforms, and public manifestoes repeating the offence began to be signed and issued. In particular on 4th October 1921, forty-seven leading Non-co-operators, Hindu, Moslem, Parsi, Christian, representing the different Provinces who met at Bombay under the presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi, issued a manifesto over their signatures affirming, each in his individual capacity, the position taken up by the Moslem leaders, and for which they had been specially selected for prosecution by the Government of Bombay.

Even before this, and some time after the holding of the Karachi Conference, an all-India association of Moslem divines known as the Jamiat-ul-Ulema had met at Delhi and passed a resolution embodying the same principles as had been laid down by the Karachi resolution. A leaflet in the form of Futwa signed by five hundred Ulemas of the Jamiat was alleged by the Government to have been printed, published and circulated among Moslem troops. The leaflet was pronounced by Maulana Mahomed Ali as a forgery. He further said before the Sessions Court at Karachi during the course of the trial of himself and his compatriots:—"It is for the first time in my life that I saw the leaflet here. In fact, it was for the first time in my life a little while ago that I came to know of this Futwa of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema on this matter, though I knew of their resolution at Delhi."

Immediately after the issue of the signed Bombay manifesto the Congress Working Committee at its sitting in that city supported the Karachi Khilafat Conference resolution in the following terms:—

"The Working Committee congratulates the Ali Brothers and their comrades upon their prosecution, and having

considered the Karachi Khilafat Conference resolution regarding military service under Government, the Working Committee is of opinion that the resolution virtually re-affirms the principle laid down by the Congress at its special session in Calcutta and its ordinary session last year."

Similarly also, as soon as the Bombay Manifesto of the leaders had been published, distinguished representatives of the people who could not attend the Bombay Conference sent urgent appeals to Mahatmaji to have their names inserted as signatories. He refers to them in the following terms in "Young India" (October 20, 1921).

"Telegrams and letters have poured in upon me from Mr. C. R. Das downwards authorising me to insert their signatures to the manifesto on the Karachi resolution. I am not announcing all the names because I hold it to be unnecessary. It was a demonstration to show that the Moslem divines were not the only ones who held it sinful to serve the present Government, and the Ali Brothers and their co-accused were not the only persons to approve of the Karachi Resolution. The others will sign the manifesto if the Government will graciously honour the signatories with arrest and imprisonment."

The Bombay Government, which had issued a communique explaining their reasons for proceeding against the Ali Brothers and others in connection with the Karachi resolution, now thought it prudent to preserve a discreet silence over the commission all over the country of precisely the same kind of offence for which the Karachi "offenders" had been arrested and were being prosecuted.

Mahatmaji in considering what would be the acid test of the bonafides of Lord Reading's Government fixed upon the release of the Futwa prisoners as furnishing that test. It is necessary, however, to note that there was a larger proposition for which he contended throughout, even down to the date of the famous "Ultimatum" (February, 1921), and that was that all proposals for the holding of a conference with the Government must be preceded by the latter agreeing to release all non-co-operating prisoners, who without being guilty of violence or incitement to violence, had been cast into prison. This, of course, necessarily

included the release of the Futwa prisoners, as also the release of the Criminal Law Amendment Act prisoners without their names being specifically mentioned. Even if we confined ourselves to the December negotiations, that is the particular negotiations initiated about the middle of December, 1921 by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, it would be found on scrutiny of one particular telegram from Mahatmaji *viz.*, Telegram No. VIII that he had not withdrawn from the larger contention to which I have referred. In that telegram Mahatmaji clearly enunciated his point of view that all Non-co-operators, who without being guilty of actual violence, or incitement to violence, had been imprisoned by Government should be set at large, as a condition precedent, if indeed Lord Reading wanted to prove his sincerity that he was willing enough to arrange a conference with the representatives of the people for purposes of settlement of the issues in dispute. Nevertheless while replying to the joint telegram of Messrs. Das and Azad, he did not insist upon the wider proposition, but mentioned only the release of the Futwa prisoners (along with the release of the Criminal Law Amendment Act prisoners) as a pre-condition to his agreeing to call off the Congress boycott. The more limited proposition, in Mahatmaji's eyes, was of such tremendous importance in the particular circumstances of the case, that Lord Reading's acceptance of it would by itself have proved his moral conversion, his change of heart, and so would have guaranteed the success of any conference with the Government. For it was clear to Mahatmaji that so long as Lord Reading and his Government wanted to hold on to their policy of aggressive lawlessness against the Non-co-operators, there was little likelihood of their agreeing to the release of the Futwa prisoners.

Such was Mahatmaji's point of view when he penned his reply to the joint telegram. He saw that Messrs. Das and Azad had not looked at the question in the light of the deeper strategy of the Government, but had allowed themselves to be lured by the illusory prospect of a Round Table Conference which was to settle all outstanding issues. Mahatmaji's answer insisting upon the release of the Futwa prisoners and upon the determination of the date, composi-

tion, etc., of the conference as additional stipulations, which he embodied in his reply, therefore came to Messrs. Das and Azad, and Pandit Malaviya, and other Moderate friends, as a shock and a surprise. They foresaw that the Viceroy was not likely to be placated. And so when the deputation of the Moderate leaders waited upon Lord Reading on 21st December, 1921 in Calcutta, nothing came of it. For Lord Reading, while showing all due courtesy to the deputation, and especially to Pandit Malaviyaji, gave them definitely to understand that so long as "the leaders responsible for non-co-operation activities had not given them the necessary assurance that those activities would cease" nothing further was possible for him to do at the time. And so the curtain dropped there.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN IS A ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE NOT A ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE?

The particular attitude of mind which Mahatmaji brought to bear upon the question of negotiations with Lord Reading and his Government, and which led him to visualise the dangers and the futility of such negotiations at that stage of the non-co-operation movement, requires ampler consideration. For, if anybody went away with the impression that because Mahatmaji refused to be misled by the lure of what he conceived to be a spurious Round Table Conference, he was against all negotiations, he would be thoroughly mistaken. Mahatmaji was not against negotiations *per se*. There were negotiations and negotiations, and he wanted clearly to discriminate between them. It was because some of his Moderate friends, and some of his own lieutenants, wanted him to enter into negotiations which were to him clearly not of the genuine brand that he felt it necessary to set his face against the attempt, and sought to impress on them its dangers and futility. On the other hand, he would eagerly accept opportunities of negotiations in such vital matters as Swaraj, or the other Congress demands, if, and when, the conferring parties stood on an absolute level of equality of status. Therefore, he saw no virtue or merit in negotiations at a Round Table Conference so-called, at which the Indian representatives not having proved their strength could only sit as "beggars," *i.e.*, petitioners negotiating for favours at the hands of a Government "entrenched behind their armed force."

Accordingly, when at the Ahmedabad Congress Pandit Malaviyaji moved that the Congress should pass a resolution in favour of a Round Table Conference with the Government, Mahatmaji fought against it, because it would be a conference where there was no real equality of status between the conferring parties. Further, he argued that as the

Government was guilty of acts of aggression and wrong-doing towards the people, and as the victims of such aggression had not yet put forward such strength as could effectually back up their just demands, it was not for the latter to approach the Government for a conference, which would have the effect of misleading the country. For it would not be a conference between equals, and yet an air of unreality would be cast on it, and it would be made to appear that the Government had convened a Round Table Conference, *i.e.*, a conference between equals. In other words, Mahatmaji argued that the victims must have incontestably proved their power of determined, disciplined, organised, and non-violent resistance to Governmental wrong-doing, before they could hope that their demands were not to be trifled with. In which case, as would be obvious, they would have asserted their equality of status with the representatives of the Government at such conference. That was one way, according to him, whereby equality of status could accrue. The other alternative was for the wrong-doing Government to realise the error of their ways, and on the basis of such conversion to seek to retrace their steps and prepare the way for a settlement of differences with the representatives of the people at a Round Table Conference, in which case also there would be equality of status between the conferring parties.

Where neither of these two alternatives was possible, all talk of Round Table Conference with the representatives of the Government, boasting not of their moral strength but of their superior armed power, would be, as has already been hinted, not only futile, but misleading. For it would put the victims of Governmental wrong-doing and aggression on the wrong track. Therefore, Mahatmaji argued, if the conference in question was not to be merely a bogus Round Table Conference, that is to say, if it was not to be a conference as between superiors and inferiors, as between masters and suppliants, then the better course for the people would be to go on developing their strength, so as to hasten the date of an "honest" conference, *i.e.*, a conference where the conferring parties should be equally matched.

Throughout the negotiations with Mahatmaji, as

conducted under the leadership of Pandit Malaviyaji, Mahatmaji's standpoint had remained one and the same. If there was to be an immediate conference of the genuine brand, then the Government must make it clear that there was admission on their part that they had entered on a course of wrong-doing from which they were prepared to desist. For in that case, a Round Table Conference with the representatives of the people would be an "honest" conference. Arguing from this point of view, he asked for some change of heart of the Government; and as such a sign, he suggested to the promoters the release of the Futwa prisoners as a condition precedent to his calling off the Congress boycott of the Prince. If such change of heart was not forthcoming and the Government chose to remain "entrenched behind their armed forces," then Mahatmaji insisted that all "essential non-co-operation activities" must go on. In other words, there could be no suspension of preparations for the ultimate launching of Civil Disobedience to enforce the Triple Demand of the Congress.

Mahatmaji saw that the kind of conference proposed by the Moderate leaders might be agreed to by the Government as part of a policy, as a matter of diplomatic manœuvre. But in such case it would be clear there could be no change of their heart, that is to say, there would be no desire on the part of the Government to retrace their steps, and desist from the course of wrong-doing. If that be so, Mahatmaji foresaw that it would be suicidal for the people not to go on accumulating their strength on the lines laid down in the non-co-operation programme. According to Mahatmaji, in case the Government chose not to depart from their policy of repression as a matter of a complete change of moral outlook, then the time for Non-co-operators to desist from essential non-co-operation activities would come not before the holding of the conference, but after the conference had been held and the results had proved satisfactory. This was Mahatmaji's message to Pandit Malaviyaji.

Arguing from these general principles, Mahatmaji laid down that any individual Non-co-operator could join the proposed conference. But if the Congress or the

general body of Non-co-operators as a *party* should have to accept such a conference, it must be an "honest" or a genuine conference as between equal and equal, and not a make-believe. But the proposed conference, in Mahatmaji's view, was to be a make-believe, if of course it did at all materialise. Nevertheless, the question before him was whether he could place before the Government certain proposals or terms of his own, which if accepted by the latter, would have made the conference what he wanted it to be, namely, a genuine thing, and not a camouflage. He discovered such a procedure, and placed it before Lord Reading, which the latter would not accept, because that it would have involved giving the go-by to the policy of repression which was the trump-card in the hands of the Government. Mahatmaji's further proposition was that, assuming the Government did not accept his proposals and the conference was going to be one between a superior and an inferior, between a master and a petitioner, still he himself, in his individual capacity, was prepared to attend it, and render such service as it was possible for him to offer under the circumstance. The implication was that he would not be required to commit either the Congress or the general body of Non-co-operators as a party in any way ; which meant that he would not be called upon to waive the hartal or other essential non-co-operating activities, including the suspension of preparations for the ultimate launching of mass Civil Disobedience. The following extracts from "Young India" make his position absolutely clear :—

"I make it clear through Moderate and other friends that I would not miss a single opportunity of having honest conferences and consultations." And again,— "I do consider the idea of the conference for devising a scheme of full Swaraj premature. India has not yet incontestably proved her strength. Her suffering is great, indeed, but nothing and prolonged enough for the object in view. She has to go through greater discipline. We are still so weak. When India has evolved disciplined strength, I would knock myself at the Viceregal door for a conference, and I know that the Viceroy would gladly embrace the opportunity whether he be an eminent lawyer or a distinguished

militarist. That is the meaning of a meeting of equals with equals who eliminate the idea of force, and instantly shift their ground as they appreciate the injustice of their position. There can, therefore, be no appeal to one's weakness or incapacity. The appeal can only be addressed to reason."*

From a letter to Pandit Malaviya which was read before the Indian Legislative Assembly on January 18, 1922 by the late Mr. Seshagiri Iyer, formerly a Judge of the Madras High Court, then a member of the Assembly, on the occasion of a motion by Mr. Ishwar Saran for the abandonment of the policy of repression inaugurated by the Government, Mahatmaji explained more fully his idea of a Round Table Conference. The following relevant extracts are from that letter.

"I would not consider the unwillingness of the Government or the Parliament to grant any of these things to be a ground for reducing these (Congress) demands. The value of a Round Table Conference consists in understanding each other's difficulties, and of making allowances for them. Hence my insisting that the Government must change their heart. If they entrench themselves behind their armed forces, the conference would not only be useless, but mischievous."

* "Young India" 19th January, 1922.

CHAPTER VII.

WHO SET THE BALL ROLLING ?

It is difficult to lay down categorically who originated the idea of a Round Table Conference with the Government of Lord Reading. The facts are as follows :—On the 13th December (1921), the Prince of Wales visited Benares. On the same date he visited the Benares Hindu University, and was received by Pandit Malaviya, its Vice-Chancellor. On the following day, Panditji sent a wire to Mahatmaji intimating that he desired to convene a conference of Liberals and Non-co-operators either at Benares or at Bombay on the 22nd or the 23rd of the month. He also stated therein that he would be coming to Sabarmati on 18th December to see Mahatmaji and have a consultation with him. Mahatmaji wired in reply that the idea of holding a conference of the different political parties in the country had his whole-hearted support. But he pointed out that the Working Committee of the Congress was to meet at Ahmedabad on the 22nd and 23rd in connection with the annual session of the Congress at Ahmedabad to be held immediately after. Therefore, he could not leave Ahmedabad, and join the conference unless it was held at Ahmedabad. In Pandit Malaviya's telegram of the 14th December, there was no suggestion that he was contemplating a Round Table Conference with the Government.

We learn, however, from Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas of Bombay and Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru of Allahabad, both well-known Moderates, that the idea of a Round Table Conference with the Government took shape as the result of a private conversation between Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr. Annie Besant. Thus, in a statement to the Press, dated, Benares, 23rd December (1921), Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas and Pandit Kunzru wrote as follows :—

“A few days ago Mrs. Besant and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya decided in view of the recent developments to

approach His Excellency the Viceroy, with a request to convene a Round Table Conference of the representatives of all shades of political opinion which would suggest the solution of the problems with which Government and people are confronted at this juncture." (*Bombay Chronicle*, December 27, 1921).

If we accept the above statement, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr. Besant had already been contemplating the plan of a Round Table Conference with the Government, although in his previous telegram to Mahatmaji, Panditji had not divulged the whole of his intentions. There is clear evidence, however, that on 16th December, i.e., two days after Panditji had despatched his 14th December message from Benares to Mahatmaji, Malaviyaji apprised Mahatmaji by another telegram of his intention to lead a deputation of some seven members to the Viceroy, Lord Reading, on the 21st of the same month, to press upon him the necessity of a Round Table Conference, and that he was therefore going down to Calcutta. This message was from Allahabad.* On the same day, on the 16th, an Associated Press Message from Allahabad said:—"Mrs. Annie Besant had sent a communication to the "Leader" of Allahabad in which she suggests that there should be a meeting of half-a-dozen party leaders including Mahatma Gandhi to discuss the preliminaries so as to find out if there was a common basis for discussion. If such a basis is found, the Viceroy it is suggested, should be asked to have a Round Table Conference consisting of a limited number of leaders of Non-co-operation, Liberal Federation, and National Home Rule League with some persons invited by the Viceroy himself. The preliminary meeting should be held in Calcutta, if possible before the Viceroy leaves the town."

Thus, we find that on one and the same date, namely, the 16th December, both Mrs. Besant and Pandit Malaviya while at Allahabad had expressed themselves in favour of a Round Table Conference. And there is further evidence that between the 14th and 16th December, Panditji had

* The full text of the message is given in Chapter IX entitled "The Historic Telegrams," where it appears as Telegram No. 1.

received from somebody, whom he elsewhere declares as his "friend" the suggestion of the idea of a Round Table Conference with the Viceroy. In a Press Statement, dated, Amritsar, 30th June 1923, Pandit Malaviyaji made the following declaration with reference to the question of a Round Table Conference, which formed the subject-matter of the December negotiations of 1921. "We had invited His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to the Benares Hindu University, and being its Vice-Chancellor, I was bound to remain there until the 13th of December to receive him. I had to remain there on the following day also for the annual Convocation of the University. As soon as I was free I sought an interview with His Excellency the Viceroy on the subject. Just at this time a friend suggested the idea of a Deputation to the Viceroy to urge that a Round Table Conference should be held to discuss the demands of the Congress; that the notifications which had been issued should be withdrawn; that the gentlemen who had been arrested and imprisoned should be released; and that there should be a truce between the people and the Government; that Mr. Gandhi should withdraw opposition to the Prince's welcome and suspend civil disobedience till the termination of the Conference. I liked the idea. I went to Calcutta and sought an interview with His Excellency the Viceroy."

It seems reasonable, therefore, to infer that having received this suggestion from his "friend," Pandit Malaviyaji wired from Allahabad on 16th December about the proposed Round Table Conference, which necessitated his going down to Calcutta. Who this friend was, whether it was Mrs. Besant, or somebody else, is not clear. But it was well-known at the time that Panditji was in close personal touch with his friend Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the distinguished publicist of Allahabad, who was then holding the office of the Law Member of Lord Reading's Government, and it might well have been that the suggestion had emanated from him.

In any event it is clear that the idea of a Round Table Conference with the Viceroy to arrive at some sort of a settlement of all outstanding issues was in the air. For

we find also that four "Moderate" members of the Indian Legislative Assembly had already chalked out a plan, according to which the Government was to be approached to call a "Round Table Conference with the Government of the leaders of all shades of political thought in the country." It was a joint manifesto* signed by Messrs. Jadunath Mazumdar (Bengal), Rangachariar (Madras), Iswar Saran (U. P.), and K. C. Neogy (Bengal). Pandit Malaviya was not a signatory to it.

The manifesto began with a statement of the terrible unrest throughout India, condemned the repressive policy of the Government as futile, and then went on to say :—

"In our judgment the preliminary step that should be taken by Government is to call a Round Table Conference of the leaders of all shades of political thought in the country. Many a knotty problem in the past has been thus solved. We venture to think that this will not cause any loss of prestige to Government. On the other hand, we are of opinion that Government will have everything to gain and nothing to lose by adopting such a course."

The first mention of the idea of a Round Table Conference between the representatives of the people and the Government is thus to be found in this particular manifesto issued by four Moderate members of the Indian Legislative Assembly as early as 14th December. Then, about the same time we find the Lucknow Liberal League comprised of members of the Moderate school passing a resolution, the full text of which is as follows :—

"The League is firmly of opinion that immediate and earnest efforts should be made by the Government and the people alike to compose the situation, and it strongly suggests that an early Round Table Conference should be held in which prominent leaders of the Non-co-operation Party, the Liberal Party, and the National Home Rule League, and some members of the Government should participate with a view to bring about a better understanding and satisfactory settlement, that the notification extending

* This manifesto was published in the Calcutta papers on 14th December, 1921.

the Criminal Law Amendment Act to the Congress and Khilafat Associations should be at once withdrawn and persons convicted and imprisoned thereunder should be immediately released."*

Simultaneously with the above, we find the Allahabad Liberal Party passing a resolution to a similar effect.

Then, again, we find a manifesto issued over the signatures of many well-known title-holders and lawyers of Calcutta asking the Government to convene a Round Table Conference for discussion and settlement of the points at issue between the Non-co-operators and the Government. This manifesto concluded with a threat that in the event of the Viceroy (Lord Reading) not accepting their suggestion, all the different political parties would be forced to combine in opposition to the Government, putting aside for the moment all their other differences. The particular words used for the purpose were as follows :—
"We feel absolutely convinced that in the event of the Government refusing or failing to allay this increasing unrest by the withdrawal of the present repressive policy, all sections of the community will be driven into this struggle putting aside for the time being all differences of political opinion. Wise and timely statesmanship may yet avert a crisis."†

* *Vide* "Servant" of Calcutta, December 17, 1921 and other dailies.

† *Vide* "Servant" of Calcutta, December 17, 1921 and other dailies.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LONG RANGE CONVERSATIONS.

The whole story of the negotiations with Mahatmaji initiated by Pandit Malaviyaji on the 16th December (1921) by means of his Allahabad telegram of that date is to be found embodied in a series of twelve telegrams.* The conversations were at long range, because the protagonists of the proposed negotiations were then in Calcutta, while Mahatmaji was at his Ashram at Sabarmati (Ahmedabad). He had his hands full there. He was engaged in directing and supervising all the preliminary business connected with the holding at Ahmedabad of the annual session of the Indian National Congress in the last week of December. The Moderate leaders headed by Pandit Malaviyaji were in Calcutta organising opinion of influential Bengal leaders in favour of a Round Table Conference. The lifting of the Congress boycott of the Prince's welcome and the suspension of Civil Disobedience by Mahatma Gandhi were the principal items in their programme of work. These were to be employed as effectual levers to move Lord Reading. The Viceroy was then in Calcutta, and a Moderate Deputation was to wait on him on 21st December. The object of the Deputation was to initiate negotiations between the two contending parties, the Government and the Non-co-operationists preceded by a suspension of hostility on both sides. The negotiations would be by way of a Round Table Conference to be convened by Lord Reading. Pandit Malaviyaji's Allahabad telegram of 16th December shown as Telegram No. I gives the clue to the whole of this transaction.

The twelve telegrams forming the subject-matter of what has been called the "December Negotiations" with Lord Reading were, it would be seen, compressed within the space of a bare week. Six of these messages contained

* Vide Chapter IX entitled "The Historic Telegrams".

requests by Moderate leaders to Mahatmaji, more or less insistent, inviting him to call off the Congress boycott under certain conditions which it was thought the Viceroy might agree to accept. The other six were replies by Mahatmaji. They were firm, but couched in conciliatory terms. In two or three of them especially, he sought to explain his position as the head of a party, as far as short telegraphic communications would allow. But he was careful to point out to the negotiators that it was not possible for him to comply with their wishes unless they agreed to certain further stipulations which in his opinion were essential in the circumstances of the case. He warned them also of the danger of complying with their wishes in terms of the proposal they had made, unless also the additional stipulations were accepted and carried out by the Government.

Pandit Malaviyaji and his co-adjutors felt however that Lord Reading would find it difficult to agree to Mahatmaji's terms as conditions precedent to the holding of a Round Table Conference, and they were not, therefore, placed before the Viceroy by the Moderate Deputation. Thus the Deputation had to approach the Viceroy with an address asking for a Round Table Conference, and the withdrawal of orders and notifications under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, etc., but without an assurance from Mahatma Gandhi as to the lifting of the Congress ban on the Prince's visit, or the suspension of civil disobedience. The result was that Lord Reading declined to move.

A further attempt was made by Pandit Malaviyaji at the time of the Congress to get the Congress to pass a Resolution in favour of a Round Table Conference, and Mahatmaji had to make use of the telegrams that had passed between him and Moderate friends to explain the attitude he had taken up during the previous negotiations initiated by Pandit Malaviya by his Allahabad telegram of 16th December. The matter was broached by Pandit Malaviya and Mr. Jinnah at a private conference of Congress leaders which was held at their instance on 27th December (midnight) in Mahatmaji's camp. On this occasion Mahat-

maji made no reply except by reading out to the conference all the telegrams connected with the negotiations initiated by Panditji. The following day, 28th December, the matter was formally brought up by Pandit Malaviya before the Subjects Committee of the Congress. After the telegrams had been again read out and explained by Mahatmaji, the question was put to the vote. Panditji's proposal was negated by an overwhelming majority.

These long range conversations require to be properly studied by all interested in the fight against British Imperialism in India, a fight on which the Indian National Congress has but recently entered, namely, since the inauguration of the method of non-violent, direct action, as a political weapon. The earlier method of attempting to solve on the constitutional plane an issue which is evidently supra-constitutional in character, the issue of the political emancipation of India,—has still its protagonists about whose patriotism and sincerity of purpose there could be no question. These represent what is known as the Moderate school of thought. They have latterly been known also as Liberals. These conversations between Mahatma Gandhi and the Moderate leaders, therefore, reveal somewhat conflicting and even antagonistic stand-points as to methods of political work, although both are animated by one common purpose. The attainment of political unity among Indian leaders is thus hampered by the diversity and conflict of methods. The result has been that it has become possible and even easy for the protagonists of British Imperialism in India to divide and exploit the political workers and leaders so as to strengthen and tighten their grip on the country. We are still on the road to the attainment of unity of political method. The differing schools of political thought may be said to be still fighting against each other. Mahatma Gandhi has placed before the country a method of political action which he believes political India will have ultimately to adopt. But he feels also that Indians will have to re-discover the same for themselves. But this in his opinion will not be possible until the other methods have been given a fair and even prolonged trial, and found to be wanting; that is to say, until and unless the futility of the Moderate method,

or of any intermediate political method, which does not grow out of the strength of the masses, has become patent to the intelligentsia even as a matter of practical object lesson. From this standpoint I consider that a detailed study of these historic telegrams embodying the December negotiations of 1921 would be of outstanding interest both to the practical Indian politician and the political historian.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HISTORIC TELEGRAMS.

I

Office of origin.	date	hour	minute	Service	Recd. at Sabarmati, Tel. Office
Allahabad ..	16	14	55	(Express)	16H. 12M. (4-20 P.M.)

To

Mahatma Gandhi, Sabarmati.

Am arranging deputation of about seven to Viceroy on 21st to press upon him necessity of Round Table Conference. Hence going to Calcutta. Jamnadas and Kunzru reach Sabarmati to-morrow to explain situation. Desire to have your authority to say that if conference is accepted and Government stays hands and releases leaders you will withdraw opposition to Prince's welcome and suspend civil disobedience till termination conference. Calcutta address till 21st. No. 31 Burtollah Street.

MALAVIYA.

II

To

Pandit Malaviya.

Saw Jamnadas (and) Kunzru. Please do not worry (over) repression. Conference will be abortive unless Government truly penitent and anxious (to) settle three things (Punjab, Khilafat, and Swaraj).

GANDHI.

Sabarmati,
19th December, 1921.

III

Office of ori- gin.	date	hour	minute	Service Recd. at Ahmeda- Instruc- bad Tel. Office tion.
Calcutta ..	19	13	15	(Express) 19H. 10M. (7-10 P.M.

To

Mahatma Gandhi, Ahmedabad.

We recommend calling off Hartal on following conditions:—

(1) Government calling a conference (which shall soon consider all questions raised by Congress.

(2) Withdrawal of recent Government Communique and Police and Magisterial orders.

(3) Releasing all prisoners under this new law unconditionally. Reply immediately care of Superintendent, Presidency Jail, Calcutta.

C. R. DAS,

A. K. AZAD.

IV

To

C. R. Das, Esq.,

Your wire. Composition (and) date of conference should be previously determined. Releases should include prisoners convicted for Futwas, including Karachi ones. Subject to these conditions in addition (to) yours we can in my opinion waive hartal.

GANDHI.

Sabarmati,
19th December, 1921.

V.

Office of ori-	date	hour	minute	Service Recd. at Ahmeda-
gin.				Instruc- bad. Tel. Office
				tion.
Calcutta	..	20	20	55 State. 21H. 15M. (9-15 P.M.)

To

Clear Line Mahatma Gandhi, Ahmedabad.

Implore you wire immediately to following effect (Begins) If points mentioned in Das's telegram to you accepted and composition and date conference agreed upon you will call off hartal, and see that pending conclusion of proposed conference, non-co-operation activities other than those relating to national education, Swadeshi and prohibition of intoxicants without picketing in any case will be suspended and that a real truce will be observed on your side (stop) Such assurances essential in best interest of cause we all hold dear.

MAHAVIYA,
31, Burtollah Street.

VI.

To

Pandit Malaviya.

Regret exceedingly inability (to) give undertaking asked. Non-Co-operation can cease only after satisfactory result (of) conference. In no case have I authority (to) decide for Congress.

GANDHI.

Sabarmati,
20th December, 1921.

VII.

Office of ori-	date	hour	minute	Service Recd. at Sabar-
gin.				Instruc- mati Tel. Office.
				tion.
Calcutta-Bow-	20	16	55	(ordinary) 11H. 14M. (21st
bazar.				1921.)

To

Mahatma Gandhi, Sabarmati.

Bengal opinion favours opportunity for negotiation which proposed conference will afford. Giving assurance of real truce (on the part of the people) thought reasonable. Releases suggested by you may be expected before conference actually meets. Wire advice immediately.

SHYAMASUNDER,

VIII.

To

Sj. Shyamasunder.

My opinion, either conference can take place without suspension non-co-operation; or, if truce essential terms (of) conference, its composition etc. must be previously settled. We are not offering aggressive Civil Disobedience. If Government means well, they should retrace steps by unconditionally withdrawing notification, disbandment, and public meetings, and doing partial reparation by discharging those unwarrantably imprisoned. Was it not wicked (to) enforce laws which were under promise of repeal? Let them put down violence, veiled, open or intended, but we must resist with our lives this wanton (and) violent suppression (of) freedom (of) opinion.

GANDHI'.

Sabarmati,
21st December, 1921;

IX.

Office of ori- gin.	date	hour	minute	Service Recd. at Ahmeda- Instruc- bad Tel. Office tion.
Calcutta	..	21	20	30 'X Ex- 22H. 50M. (10-50 P.M.)

To

Rs. Five Mahatma Gandhi, Sabarmati,
Ahmedabad.

Can you imagine how heart-breaking it is for me? Cannot express despair in words (stop) Came full of hope only to find that your subsequent telegram to Panditji and Das practically cancelled all you told me (stop) Fail understand (stop) I venture to believe it is not yet too late (stop) Earnestly beg of you to respond to the appeal for truce in larger interests of country (stop) You of all cannot fail to take higher standpoint (stop) Your consent may yet enable us to bring about conference, which country at large including large number of your followers desire (stop) Pray wire fully .

JAMNADAS DWARKADAS,
5, Chowranghee.

X.

To

Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas.

My word to you abides. Prepared individually un- conditionally attend any conference. Viceroy putting you wrong track,. Tell me concrete terms to be observed. Only cannot waive voluntary hartal till terms stated telegram to Das satisfied.

GANDHI.

Sabarmati,
December, 22nd 1921.

XI.

Office of origin.	date	hour	minute	Service	Recd. at	Ah-
				Instruc- tion.	medabad	Tel.
Calcutta	..	22	18	'15	O (ordi- nary)	8H. 35M. (23rd December.

To

Mahatma Gandhi, Ahmedabad.

Arrived here yesterday morning read with profound regret your telegram to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya which shattered all hope of amicable settlement (stop) We confess after talk we had with you we were not prepared for it (stop) May we respectfully say in view of our conversation and your assurance you would make no conditions precedent to joining conference (stop) Your records in South Africa, your freedom from party prejudices made us confident you would not reject proposal that pending conference there should be suspension activity on either side (stop) You thought conference premature but we felt sure you would not do anything which would render it useless (stop) Viceroy's speech although one may not agree wholly with it very conciliatory in tone and temper (stop) He asked only for a temporary truce and said I should have wished that if such conditions had supervened no advantage or triumph should be claimed on either side and no reproach should be made by the one to the other of having been forced to yield or of not having courage to proceed with its campaign (stop) He explicitly said door still open (stop) Conference can still take place if neither side would insist on the other acknowledging itself to be in the wrong as a necessary preliminary to convening conference (stop) Earnestly request you reconsider matter (stop) We venture think a great opportunity of settling differences without loss self-respect or abandonment in principle being lost (stop) We understand Bengal in favour adoption such a course (stop) Please revise decision and bring peace to country (stop) Terms, reference, composition, etc., we believe can be settled easily if indispensable preliminary condi-

tion accepted (stop) Permit us say by preventing conference you will place yourself greatly in the wrong (stop) We understand you think Government particularly unjustified in using Criminal Law Amendment Act and Seditious Meetings' Act which they had promised to repeal (stop) Beg you not allow your judgment to be swayed by such considerations (stop) Besides as matter fact Government refused repeal Criminal Law Amendment Act Part II in view existing situation and postponed decision to repeal Seditious Meetings' Act in order see whether by next session Assembly better atmosphere would prevail in country (stop) Kindly wire reply Kunzru Servindia Allahabad.

JAMNADAS
KUNZRU.

XII.

Mahatma Gandhi's reply :—

Am still prepared attend any conference unconditionally. Do you not see if offensive notifications withdrawn and prisoners discharged there is no activity left to be stopped? Can you point one? But I am willing attend inspite non-withdrawal notifications and Non-co-operators continuing defensive. Wish you could realise deputation put on wrong scent.

GANDHI.

CHAPTER X.

THE EARLIER MESSAGES—I.

I have already referred to Pandit Malaviyaji's wire to Mahatmaji, dated Benares 14th December, 1921. He had invited H.R.H. the Prince of Wales to the Benares Hindu University, who had visited it on the 13th. On the day following Panditji had wired from that city to Mahatmaji that he would come to interview him at Sabarmati on the 18th in connection with a projected conference of Moderates and Non-co-operators to be held either at Bombay or at Benares. But he had to change his mind. A "friend" of his had suggested to him to arrange for a deputation to urge upon the Viceroy a Round Table Conference with a view to a settlement of all outstanding issues. In pursuance of this suggestion he had come down to Calcutta to seek an interview with His Excellency the Viceroy, who was then in that city with his Executive Council.

We had been expecting, however, the arrival of Pandit Malaviyaji at Sabarmati on 18th December. But as previously stated, on the 16th December, a message from Panditji reached us from Allahabad intimating that instead of coming to Sabarmati he was to leave for Calcutta to lead a deputation of some seven members to the Viceroy on 21st December, with a view to the holding of a Round Table Conference; and that in his place Messrs. Jamnadas Dwarkadas and Hridaynath Kunzru would be coming to Sabarmati to talk matters over with him. This is Telegram No. 1, or the first of the series of twelve telegrams which have been given in full in the last preceding chapter. As will be seen also from the text of that telegram, Panditji asked to be authorised by Mahatmaji to give on his behalf a definite undertaking to the Viceroy. It was that if the Round Table Conference proposal was accepted by Lord Reading, and if he agreed to stay hands and release imprisoned leaders, Mahatmaji on his part would withdraw opposition to the Prince's welcome and

suspend his activities connected with the launching of Civil Disobedience.

It will be noticed that the proposal for the lifting of the Congress boycott of the Prince's visit was here in this telegram (No. 1) broached for the first time. In the various proposals for a Round Table Conference as outlined by different political parties,* there was no hint or suggestion as to the withdrawal of the boycott. For instance, in the specific terms and conditions laid down by the Resolution of the Lucknow Liberal League, the full text of which has been already given, there is no reference whatsoever to the question of the cancellation of the hartal.

On receipt of Pandit Malaviya's message of 16th December (Telegram No. 1), Mahatmaji dictated to me the following by way of reply:—

“Wish you would recognise this is fight to the finish. Non-Co-operators are purely on the defensive. If provoking orders (for) disbandment and stopping public meetings (be) withdrawn present civil disobedience stops automatically. Boycott of welcome must persist so long as Government (is) irresponsive (to) public opinion. Conference will be abortive unless Government (is) truly penitent and desirous (to) remove rankling grievances and yield (to) force of public opinion. Will however discuss situation (with) Jamnadas (and) Kunzru—Gandhi.”

The reader will notice Mahatmaji's phrase “present civil disobedience” in the above draft. It refers to the individual civil disobedience (then in progress) of all orders and notifications whereby all volunteer organisations had been declared illegal, and in consequence of which whoever enrolled himself as a volunteer was arrested and cast into gaol. Mahatmaji says that such civil disobedience stopped automatically if “the provoking orders for disbandment of volunteers and stopping public meetings be withdrawn.” This Mahatmaji further explains by saying that “Non-co-operators are purely on the defensive;” and therefore if the Government wanted a calm

* Vide Chapter VIII, “Who Set the Ball Rolling?”

atmosphere for the holding of a Round Table Conference, all that the Viceroy had to do was to revoke or cancel the orders and notifications in question. For the Non-co-operators would then have no occasion to disobey any of these official orders or laws, which having regard to their character, as will be presently explained, the non-co-operating public had no option but to disobey.

In order to appreciate the full meaning of Mahatmaji's reply, the Government point of view and their allegations against the Non-co-operators require to be brought out in some detail. Thus, the Government laid down certain general preliminary conditions for the successful holding of a conference such as the Moderate politicians were pressing upon them. Firstly, any plan of negotiations with the Government would have hardly any chance of a successful issue unless it could be conducted in a "peaceful and calm atmosphere." Secondly, it was urged by them that it was for the leaders of the N. C. O. movement to ensure the creation and continuance of such atmosphere,—in which case the Government would be pleased to respond to the altered situation and might arrange for a conference. The then Governor of Bengal, Lord Ronaldshay, in addressing the Bengal Legislative Council about this time* had publicly put forward the contention, and Lord Reading also in his reply to the Calcutta Deputation propounded the same plea. But even before such public pronouncements, when Moderate leaders had been interviewing the Governor and the Viceroy and the higher officials, the point of view of the Government referred to above had been dinned into their ears, and it was thus that Pandit Malaviya in his telegram (No. 1) asked for an assurance from Mahatmaji that with a view to the acceptance by Lord Reading of his proposal of a Round Table Conference, he should prepare the way by the withdrawal or suspension of Congress activities, such as the hartal and the Civil Disobedience movement.

The Government point of view bearing on the present question was expounded by Lord Reading with his Lordship's usual suavity and diplomatic skill. Said he,—

* 19th December, 1921.

"The immediate purpose of your representation is that I should invite leading representatives of all shades of political opinion to a conference, in your words 'to counsel together and consider practical suggestions and recommendations concerning remedies which should be adopted'.. The tenour of your address implies your recognition of the need of a calm and serene atmosphere for a conference. Indeed, in my judgment, it is impossible even to consider the convening of a conference, if agitation in open and avowed defiance of law is meanwhile to be continued. Unfortunately, I look in vain in your address for any indication that these activities will cease... Had there been indication to this effect before me today in the representation which you have made in your address on the part of the leaders of non-co-operation, had the offer been made to discontinue open breaches of law for the purpose of providing a calmer atmosphere for discussion of remedies suggested, my Government would never have been backward in response."

Lord Reading here throws the whole responsibility for the creation of a peaceful atmosphere necessary for the convening of a conference on the non-co-operation leaders. Indeed, he made his position absolutely clear in one part of his reply to the Calcutta Deputationists when he said,— "You recommend—indeed your language is, that 'it seems imperative' that the various notifications and proclamations recently issued by the Government should be withdrawn and all persons imprisoned as the result of their operations immediately released. I can scarcely conceive that you have intended to present to me such recommendations without having in your mind, as a necessary corollary the equally imperative necessity for the discontinuance of those activities which have led Government to adopt the measures forming the subject of discussion."

To this Mahatmaji's reply as seen in the draft reply is clear. Said he,— "These breaches of the law would cease automatically" if the Government withdrew "provoking orders for disbandment of volunteer organisations and the orders for stopping public meetings." So it was not for the people but for the Government to create the necessary peaceful atmosphere.

Mahatmaji emphasised the same position in his "Young India" also. Referring to Lord Reading's particular plea as set forth above, Mahatmaji says,—“We have not taken the offensive. We are not the aggressors. We have not got to stop any single activity. It is the Government that is to stop its aggravatingly offensive activity, aimed not at violence, but a lawful, disciplined, stern, and absolutely non-violent agitation. It is for the Government of India, and for it alone, to bring about a peaceful atmosphere if it so desires... The immediate issue is not now the redress of the three wrongs” (*e.g.*, the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs, and the question of Swaraj, *vide* Telegram No. II) “The immediate issue is the right of holding public meetings and the right of forming associations for peaceful purposes.”*

Similarly, in reply to Lord Ronaldshay, the Governor of Bengal's speech in the Bengal Legislative Council (19th December, 1921) calling upon the Non-co-operators, to produce a calm atmosphere for the holding of a conference Mahatmaji lays down—“Let the Government come down with a heavy hand on every act of violence or incitement to it ; but we must claim the right for all time of expressing our opinions freely and educating public opinion by every legitimate and non-violent means. It is, therefore, the Government who have really to undo the grave wrong they have perpetrated, and they can have the conference if they wish in a favourable atmosphere.”†

* “Young India” 19 January, 1922.

† From Mahatma Gandhi's statement to the Associated Press of India, *vide* “Young India” 22nd December, 1921.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EARLIER MESSAGES—II.

It would thus appear that Mahatmaji wanted Pandit Malaviya not to be misled by Lord Reading, or by Lord Ronaldshay, when they declared that for the proposal of a Round Table Conference to materialise in a favourable atmosphere, what was necessary was the discontinuance of the breaches of law by the Non-co-operators. Mahatmaji explained that the breaches of law about which Lord Reading complained was but the necessary outcome of the unlawful notifications and proclamations banning volunteer organisations and public meetings; and directly these notifications and proclamations were withdrawn, the breaches in question would cease, and the peaceful atmosphere in question would as a consequence arise automatically.

This proposition by Mahatmaji requires further elucidation. Lord Reading said in his reply to the Calcutta Deputationists that the "notifications and proclamations" under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, etc., had been adopted by the Government to prevent the continuance of breaches of law, etc. To this Mahatmaji's answer is that the "notifications and proclamations" etc., directed as they were against the elementary rights of the people to hold peaceful public meetings and form peaceful public organisations, made it necessary to ignore or disobey them in the larger interests of public life and public good. Here, the direct breaches of the new laws followed on their promulgation, and could not have preceded them. Therefore, the proposition for which Lord Reading made himself responsible had no legs to stand on.

Then, he goes on to give a detailed analysis of the situation thus:—The non-co-operation programme was inaugurated to enforce the Triple Demand of the Congress (*viz.*, the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs, and the enforcement of the General Will upon an arbitrary, autocratic Government, which is the substance of Swaraj).

But now by the mis-application of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act, the issue of the Triple Demand had withdrawn into the background, and a new and more immediate issue had arisen, namely, the enforcement of the right of holding public meetings and the right of forming associations for peaceful purposes. Such a right being an elementary, fundamental right, Mahatmaji goes on to argue, "in vindicating this right, we are fighting the battle not merely on behalf of Non-co-operators, but we are fighting the battle of all schools of politics. On this question, therefore, of the right of holding public meetings and forming associations, there can be no yielding."* There can be no escape from the vindication of this essential right when it is ruthlessly and wickedly trampled under foot to cow down public opinion and sterilise all public activity for political purposes. Therefore, says he,— "What Non-co-operators are doing today, I claim every Co-operator would do tomorrow under similar circumstances. When the Government of India, or the Local Governments, attempt to make our political existence or agitation, no matter how peaceful, an utter impossibility, may we not resist such attempt by every lawful means in our power? Is it not proof of the law-abiding instinct of hundreds of young men and old men that they have meekly, without offering any defence and without complaining, accepted imprisonment for having dared to exercise their elementary rights in the face of Government persecution?" Hence for the breaches of law, those notifications and proclamations to which Lord Reading refers, in assertion or vindication of primary rights, the Government headed by Lord Reading are responsible. They have wantonly precipitated the struggle and put the general public on their mettle. Therefore, says Mahatmaji,— "Non-co-operators have really to do nothing, for they have precipitated nothing. It is the Government which has to arrest the fatal course along which repression is taking it. When the Government does that, it will find that there is an absolutely peaceful atmosphere.'†

* "Young India," 19th January, 1922.

† "Young India," 22nd December, 1921.

These breaches of law in vindication of primary rights, argues Mahatmaji, may be technically acts of individual civil disobedience, but they are not aggressive in their character. They have been resorted to simply to ward off or meet hostile, aggressive acts of repression inaugurated by the Government. They are essentially defensive in their character, and as such they will disappear as soon as the Government decided to withdraw their weapons of aggressive attack. Therefore, says Mahatmaji, it would not do for the Government to stigmatise the Non-co-operators as having launched out on such a campaign of civil disobedience against which the Government might feel justified to hurl their weapons of destruction.

Here, Mahatmaji is referring to the contemplated launching of mass civil disobedience of an aggressive character for the enforcement of the Triple Demand of the Congress. With regard to that sort of offensive taken by the Congress, Mahatmaji grants that the Government might be justified to use *force majeure* with a view to crush it, if indeed the Government was resolved upon flouting public opinion. Says Mahatmaji,—“Lord Reading must see that non-co-operation is not the disease; it is the chief symptom of a disease. The disease consists in a triple injury to the people of India. Outside the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs, and the grant of Swaraj, repression is the easiest and the shortest way to a settlement. I admit that Lord Reading must suppress aggressive civil disobedience, as he would an armed rebellion, unless he is prepared to remedy the evil towards which the disobedience is directed.”*

But the present breaches of law, Mahatmaji pointed out, are not aggressive in character. Here the immediate issue is the assertion and vindication of certain primary rights,—the right of peaceful meetings, and of forming peaceful associations—which have been wantonly and aggressively invaded by the Government. Therefore, the Government must not describe the present breaches of law as acts of aggressive hostility such as might justify them in throwing the blame and respon-

* “Young India,” December 22, 1921.

sibility for them on the shoulders of the Non-co-operators, and justify them also in calling upon the Non-co-operators to discontinue such breaches for the purpose of a creation of a favourable atmosphere amidst which a Round Table Conference might sit and deliberate. Mahatmaji makes this aspect of the matter pointedly clear in the following lines written about this time of the December negotiations,—“Let it be remembered that Non-co-operators are not offering civil disobedience now” (meaning aggressive civil disobedience). “Their insistence on calling and attending public meetings and forming peaceful volunteer associations ought not to be dignified by the name of civil disobedience. For Non-co-operators are merely on the defensive. They have not taken, as they certainly intend to take, the offensive, as soon as they are fairly certain of non-violent atmosphere.”*

Having thus demonstrated that the charge laid by Lord Reading against the Non-co-operators that the intransigent attitude of the latter stood in the way of the convening of a Round Table Conference as asked for by the Calcutta Deputation was baseless, Mahatmaji advances the further proposition that Lord Reading was not really sincere in his profession of desire for a conference for the settlement of outstanding issues. According to Mahatmaji, the Government was not merely guilty of aggressive tactics by setting the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act in motion with a view to disband all volunteers and take away from the people the elementary rights of free association, etc. The Government had also definitely set its heart against redressing in accordance with the wishes of the people the two great wrongs of the Punjab and the Khilafat. And further they stood in the way of the people's attainment of Swaraj by non-violent means. Therefore, according to Mahatmaji all talk of a Round Table Conference convened by the Government would be moonshine as long as the Government had not undergone a change of heart in the matter. Therefore, writes Mahatmaji,—“I warn our friends against entertaining the idea of a conference with the Government

* *Vide* “Young India”, December 22, 1921.

till they find that they are truly penitent and means to appreciate the popular side." Hence also in the draft reply to Panditji's telegram, Mahatmaji says that the kind of conference with the Government suggested by the former will be "abortive unless Government is truly penitent and desirous to remove rankling grievances and yield to force of public opinion."*

For the same reason also, Mahatmaji in the draft reply to Pandit Malaviya declares:—"Wish you would recognise this is fight to finish." This cryptic phrase—"fight to finish"—involves a good deal. For, if the Government did not voluntarily undergo a moral transformation, steps would have to be taken by the people to quicken its conscience. This quickening of the conscience of the Government would not be possible if the people retaliated against Governmental wrong-doing. In other words, the quickening of conscience could only be brought about, if the Non-co-operators, while on the one hand resolutely ignoring or disobeying the orders of the Government, would on the other behave non-violently while they would be subjected to injury or violence under official orders as the penalty for such disobedience. Such voluntary undergoing of self-suffering (*i.e.*, suffering without retaliation) was involved in a campaign of aggressive mass civil disobedience, which meant a peaceful or non-violent revolt on a mass scale. In other words, the objective of the revolt was not to punish the Government for their wrong-doing, but to win them over to the cause of Truth and Justice in the matter of the threefold demand^o of the Congress. And this winning over would be, as has already been made clear, through the rousing of the conscience of the Government, making them truly penitent for the orgy of lawlessness and barbarities committed against a people for no fault of theirs, but merely because they had taken a resolve to assert and enforce their legitimate demands by means of self-suffering.

If, in the language of Mahatmaji, "the fight was to the finish" what follows? It follows that mass civil disobe-

* *Vide* previous chapter. This has reference to the Triple Demand, *e.g.*, Swaraj and the redress of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs.

dience of an aggressive character would have to be ultimately undertaken, and the preparations therefor that were in progress could never be stopped unless, of course, in the meantime the Government had become "truly penitent and desirous of removing rankling grievances and yield to force of public opinion."*

The question arose—Could the preparations in question be suspended merely for the sake of the proposed Round Table Conference, as suggested by the Moderate leaders? Mahatmaji's answer was a decided negative. Why? Because, in his opinion, so far as the Government of Lord Reading was concerned, the conference, if at all materialised, would lack the element of sincerity. Mahatmaji, in fact, was clearly of opinion, as has already been mentioned, that there was no genuine desire on the part of the Viceroy to come to settlement with the representatives of the people in respect of the Triple Demand of the Congress. And so, writing in "Young India"† about this time with reference to these negotiations, Mahatmaji says:—"Speaking personally, I can certainly say that if there is a genuine desire for a conference" (on the part of the Government) "I would be the last person to advise precipitating aggressive Civil Disobedience, which certainly it is my intention to do immediately I am entirely satisfied that the people have understood the secret of non-violence."

The corollary from this attitude taken up by Mahatmaji, regarding the question of Lord Reading's sincerity in the matter of a Round Table Conference, would be this. If the proposal of a Round Table Conference did at all materialise, and if the results were satisfactory then, and not till then, could all essential non-co-operation activities, including the preparations for the ultimate launching of civil disobedience of an aggressive character, could cease. And so we find that in reply to a second message‡ from Pandit Malaviyaji asking for an undertaking from Mahatmaji that pending conclusion of the

* Quoted from the draft reply.

† "Young India", December 22, 1921.

‡ Telegram No. V, Chapter IX.

proposed R. T. Conference all essential non-co-operation activities (which included the preparations for mass Civil Disobedience) should cease, Mahatmaji wired back to say:—"Regret exceedingly inability to give undertaking asked. Non-Co-operation can cease only after satisfactory result of conference."* This reply was dated 20th December, 1921. And two days later, writing on the subject in "Young India"† we find him repeating the answer in the following terms:—"We cannot be expected, *until there is settlement or guarantee of settlement*" that non-co-operation activities should cease.

* Telegram No. VI, Chapter IX.

† "Young India," December 22, 1921.

CHAPTER XII.

REPLY TO PANDIT MALAVIYA.

Mahatmaji's draft reply to Pandit Malaviya's telegram of 16th December, referred to in the previous chapter, was not, however, despatched at all. In his telegram Panditji had informed Mahatmaji that Messrs. Jamnadas Dwarkadas and Hridaynath Kunzru, two leading Moderate politicians, would come and discuss matters with him. So he thought that the reply should be held over temporarily, and that it was better to send a reply after he had explained to them in detail his own point of view, and had heard from them in reply. "No," said Mahatmaji "don't send this telegram. I shall explain matters to Jamnadas and Kunzru when they arrive." On the same day that Panditji's telegram referred to above reached the Ashram, there came also a wire from a certain landowner of Jubbulpur (Central Provinces) containing a similar suggestion as to the need of a Round Table Conference. It ran as follows:—"Situation extremely grave. Both sides equally determined. Undesirable happening not unlikely. Your responsibility serious. Viceroy requested to hear." Mahatmaji's answer to this was that it was the Government and not the Non-co-operators that were on the warpath. The latter were so far purely on the defensive. The wording of the reply was as follows:—"Non-co-operators purely on the defensive. No conference can do good unless Government is penitent and prepared to recognise supremacy of public opinion—Gandhi."

From the warnings from different quarters that were being addressed to Mahatmaji at the time, it appeared to us, who were near about him, that Mahatmaji's fixed determination to offer final battle to the Government to enforce the Triple Demand of the Congress had unnerved many. He had set his heart in the final resort

on unfurling the banner of a peaceful revolt* (unless of course the Government had in the meantime repented of its ways), and he was engaged in training his people along lines of non-violence and mass-organisation. He would not count the cost in the shape of endless suffering of the civil resisters at the hands of the Government. In his words, the fight was to be a fight to the finish. He was preparing for this larger ultimate fight, which of course, was not to be launched prematurely. Before it comes Mahatmaji must be thoroughly satisfied that the resisters would be able to stand provocation in the shape of official violence, legal or extra-legal, and not be tempted into retaliation.

All this had thoroughly frightened the Moderates, although they were equally aghast at the frightful policy of the Government. It was becoming increasingly clear to us that the Moderates being thus thoroughly frightened at Mahatmaji's determination to launch out on aggressive Civil Disobedience, had thought out this plan of a Round Table Conference, in order that further preparations in the direction of such disobedience might be arrested. The general idea among them at the time was that the Ahmedabad Congress was going to sanction the immediate launching of such a campaign, and, therefore, according to them, it had become imperative to stay the hands of the Congress, as well as Lord Reading's Government.

As has already been mentioned, Mahatmaji had arranged for a visit of inspection to the Anand Taluka (Guzarat) on the 12th December. It was postponed for a short while on account of the excitement in the country following in the wake of repression. On the 17th, however, he proceeded to Anand to see for himself the progress of preparations for mass Civil Disobedience in that Taluka. Thus, we find that Mahatmaji, although apprised on the 16th December by Malaviyaji of his intention to lead a deputation to Lord Reading in Calcutta with a view to arrange for a Round Table Conference, did not set much store by the proposal, and on the day following set out for Anand. The fact of the matter is that Mahat-

* I. E. Aggressive mass Civil Disobedience.

maji had realised from the beginning that Pandit Malaviya's efforts at establishing peace would lead to nowhere, for everything hinged, in Mahatmajī's opinion, on a change of heart of the Government, leading to a change of its attitude, and then to a change of its policy in relation to the threefold demand* of the Congress, namely, that of the Punjab, Khilafat, and Swaraj.

Mahatmajī returned to the Ashram from his tour of inspection on the evening of 17th December. Messrs. Jamnadas Dwarkadas and Hridaynath Kunzru also arrived the same evening at 9-30 P.M. Discussions with them lasted till one o'clock in the morning. Mahatmajī's point was that he was prepared to attend any conference that the Government might convene, but he would do so only in his personal, individual capacity. Further, there should be no attempt to bind him, or the Congress, in advance by any terms or conditions whatsoever. The next morning, Messrs. Jamnadas and Kunzru left for Calcutta to join the Calcutta Deputation to the Viceroy.

Now that the Ahmedabad session of the Congress was drawing near, visitors from all parts of the country had begun to pour in at the Ashram. This was also the time when lengthy reports detailing the barbarities and illegalities that were being perpetrated by the officials in the different provinces were reaching us in shoals. Mahatmajī, however, had no leisure to look into them. His hands were already too full. On the 15th December, he had drafted the resolutions to be placed before the Congress, and for some time we were kept busily engaged in copying and despatching these to various parties and places.

In the meantime, Mahatmajī had made up his mind to send a reply to Pandit Malaviya's message of 16th December.* It was despatched on the 19th December, and is the second of the series of twelve telegrams detailed in a previous chapter.† In this he requested Panditji not to worry over the Government repression; and also

* Telegram No. II.

† Chapter IX "Historic Telegrams."

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pointed out that in his opinion the proposed conference would be abortive unless the Government was penitent and really anxious for a settlement in connection with the three outstanding demands of the Congress, namely, those of the Punjab, the Khilafat and Swaraj.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. C. R. DAS INTERVENES FROM GAOL.

On the day that Mahatmaji sent his reply to Pandit Malaviya's message of December 16th, there came by wire a joint request from Messrs. C. R. Das and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad from the Calcutta Presidency Gaol, where they had been lodged as under-trial prisoners. On the 10th December at 4-30 P.M. Mr. C.R. Das and Maulana Azad had both been arrested ostensibly under the provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which had made all volunteer organisations unlawful, and the enlistment of volunteers illegal. Both Mr. C.R. Das and Maulana Azad, one a Hindu and the head of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, and the other a Muslim, the head of the Bengal Khilafat Committee, were conducting in Bengal the great non-co-operation movement, when they were arrested under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. That "Act" was a "new law" passed in 1908 to circumvent anarchists and other revolutionaries. But it had never been intended to serve the purpose of suppressing peaceful political associations, which worked in the broad light of day, and whose watchword was "non-violence." But the need of coercing the people of India into according a popular welcome to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, and so to deal a death-blow to the movement of non-co-operation and the commanding popularity of its great leader was felt by the Government of Lord Reading to be so imperative as to demand the sweeping away of all other considerations, whether of law or of morals. The Act by a fiat of the Governor-General was set in motion, and the elementary right of free association and free speech, without which no organised political work was possible, was taken away, while at the same time it was paraded both by Lord Reading, the Viceroy, and Lord Ronaldshay, the Bengal Governor, that nothing was being done by the Government except discharging the elementary func-

tion of all civilised Government, namely, the preservation of Law and Order, and the protection of all law-abiding citizens. Thus it was that Mr. C.R. Das and Maulana Azad, and thousands upon thousands of other Non-co-operators, were thrown into prison, in order that the Congress boycott of the Prince's welcome might be nullified; and without even the slightest pricking of the official conscience.

The joint message from Messrs. Das and Azad has been already reproduced as telegram No. III. It was an Express telegram which reached the Ashram on the evening of 19th December about 8-30 P.M. It arrived sometime after Mahatmaji had wired back to Pandit Malaviyaji his reply to the latter's Allahabad telegram dated the 16th December (Telegram No. 1). The joint telegram made the terms contained in Panditji's message of 16th December more explicit, more definite and categorical. Nevertheless, there was one outstanding difference between the two telegrams. For in Panditji's telegram (No. 1) we notice that Mahatmaji was required not only "to withdraw opposition to the Prince's welcome," but also "to suspend Civil Disobedience." This last condition is absent in the gaol telegram from Messrs. Das and Azad. Pandit Malaviya repeated, as we shall see, these two conditions of his in a subsequent telegram to Mahatmaji, namely telegram No. V.

As will be seen, the joint telegram begins with the words. "We recommend calling off hartal on following conditions." In other words, immediate request of the joint authors was that the Calcutta hartal, which was fixed for 24th December, the date on which the Prince was to enter Calcutta, was to be abandoned, if the Government of Lord Reading accepted certain conditions enumerated in their telegram. Nothing was said either in this telegram or in the Allahabad telegram from Panditji, which had preceded it on 16th December, as to whether or how far the Viceroy had been consulted in the matter. Mahatmaji was kept in the dark as to the actual negotiations, if any, with the Government or the Viceroy. Mahatmaji was, as

it were, sought to be stampeded into compliance with what appeared to be a rather peremptory request, seeing that he was wholly ignorant of all the attendant circumstances that had gone to the formulation to the request. As will be presently seen, the reply which he gave to the joint authors had to be so drafted as to bring out the real implications of the joint message, although it took the shape of Mahatmaji's laying down certain additional terms of his own.

This is the first general comment on this joint telegram (No. III), which strikes one at the very outset. Then with regard to the specific conditions following on the request for the calling off of the Congress boycott of the Princes' visit, the obvious considerations applicable to them taken as a whole may be stated as follows: The objective of the non-co-operation campaign was the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, and the attainment of Swaraj, or to use the technical language employed by Congressmen, that objective was the "enforcement of the Triple Demand of the Congress." The hartal, or the ban on the Prince's visit, was also for the time being a vital part of the political campaign of non-co-operation; firstly, because the visit was engineered by the authorities as against public opinion, as represented by the Indian National Congress; and, secondly, because any real success or that visit would have spelt either the defeat, or would have tended seriously to injure, the popular movement. Therefore, what struck Mahatmaji was that before he could think of lifting the boycott, he must be clear in his mind as to whether, or how far, there was any real desire in the mind of the Viceroy to come to a settlement with the Non-co-operators. Were the authors of the joint telegram justified (when they made the proposal of a Round Table Conference to be convened by the Viceroy) in holding that the latter was favourably disposed towards the consideration of the redress of the two wrongs in question, and also towards the recognition of the country's claim to Swaraj? Or, was the withdrawal of the popular ban on the Prince's reception the real and primary objective with

the Viceroy? Therefore, was there no danger of the country being misled, or the whole movement being side-tracked, if the leaders proceeded to parley with the Government for a Round Table Conference, without clearly understanding or ascertaining beforehand what was really at the back of their mind?

Such are the general considerations which struck Mahatmaji as highly relevant, and suggested the particular answers which he gave to Mr. C.R. Das in respect to each one of the several clauses of his telegram. And first of all Mr. Das had laid down that the "Government should call a conference soon to consider all questions raised by the Congress." Now, what struck Mahatmaji here was that although Mr. Das's telegram demanded in advance his sanction for the cancellation of the Calcutta hartal, there was nothing said about such essentials as the composition, the date, or the power of the proposed conference. Evidently, Mr. Das was prepared to withdraw the Congress boycott in anticipation of the Government convening an undefined conference. For, judging by the words of his telegram, he would be satisfied only if the conference was summoned "soon." But Mahatmaji's point was that he could not commit himself to the calling off of hartal without first of all ascertaining the date of the conference, the composition, *i.e.*, personnel of the conference, and also of the terms of reference. That was Mahatmaji's answer to the first of the "conditions"—mentioned in the joint telegram. Hence in the first part of his reply to the joint telegram, Mahatmaji said, "Composition, date of conference, etc., should be previously determined."

The second condition laid down in the gaol telegram was,—“Withdrawal by Government of their recent communiqué and Police and Magisterial orders.” So far as this condition was concerned, Mahatmaji accepted it as essential under the circumstances of the situation. Nevertheless, it is needful to appreciate the full implications of this second propositions or condition advocated by Messrs. Das and Azad. What this condition said was simply this,—The Government was to

withdraw or cancel only the repressive measures inaugurated under the provisions of what the joint authors call "this new law" in the next succeeding clause of the telegram. "This new law," namely, the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, was, as we have seen, arbitrarily employed to take away the elementary right of the people for forming peaceful associations, and the enlistment and organisation of volunteers on peaceful lines.* And it had been put into operation by all the Local Governments and Administrations after the arrival of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, with a view to disband the then existing volunteer organisations, prevent the enlistment of fresh volunteers, and so help in stopping the mouths of the people and their spokesmen, and nullifying the Congress boycott. Thus, if Mahatmaji, in compliance with the wishes of the joint authors of the gaol telegram had consented to lift the Congress ban, the immediate object of the Government (namely, that which was aimed at by setting in motion or application to the different Provinces of "this new law") would have been gained as by a master-stroke of political diplomacy.

But beyond this triumph of political manoeuvre that would thus be achieved by the Government of Lord Reading by his skill in compelling the Non-co-operators to give up their boycott of the Prince under the lash, so to say, of the Criminal Law Amendment Act notifications, and Police and Magisterial orders issued thereunder, there is a more vital issue involved. And a reference to this would make it abundantly clear that the withdrawal by the Government of "this new law" following on the lifting of the Congress boycott was not such a simple matter of political arithmetic, as it might otherwise appear. And to begin with, it must be observed that the Prince's visit (against which the hartal was launched) was a definite act of State, and not a mere pleasure trip. It embodied a deep-laid political objective, which was, as has already been mentioned, the bringing about the collapse of the national movement, and the popularity of its great leader Mahatma Gandhi, through the evoking of loyal mass-feeling, fol-

lowed by a wave of popular demonstrations in favour of the Heir-Apparent. Having seen through the game, and understanding that the visit of the Prince had been intended to be a sort of a flank attack on the N.C.O. movement, Mahatma Gandhi could not agree to Mr. C.R. Das's proposal for the calling off of the Calcutta hartal, which had been fixed for December 24 (1921), the date for the entry of the Prince into Calcutta. The cancellation of the boycott, in Mahatmaji's considered judgment, was possible only when it was unmistakably clear that the Government was not playing their own game in the matter of a Round Table Conference; in other words, when there was every chance of an "honest conference" between the representatives of the Government and those of the people.

In this way we find Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Reading each entrenched behind his own position, and each unwilling to do anything which would jeopardise his particular interests. Looked at from this point of view, the inwardness of the whole series of telegrams addressed to Mahatmaji and of his replies thereto would appear in a clear light. But more specially would this view-point reveal the inner significance of the particular additional stipulations which Mahatmaji laid down as a pre-condition to his calling off of the hartal with special reference to the third and last clause or condition embodied in Mr. C. R. Das's telegram.

This last condition ran thus:—"Releasing all prisoners under this new law unconditionally." Now, what does this unconditional release of prisoners "under this new law" mean and imply? It meant only the unconditional release of Non-co-operators, who, like Messrs. Das and Azad, had been cast into prison under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908. But there were other non-co-operating leaders and workers, who had been cast into prison under the Seditious Meetings Act, or under sections of the Penal Code, or of the Criminal Procedure Code. If the third condition formulated by Mr. Das was agreed to by Mahatmaji, then the last mentioned class of Non-co-operators must continue to remain in prison. And among these were men like Lala Lajpat

Rai of the Punjab; as also Maulanas Mohamed Ali and Shaikat Ali, Dr. Kitchlew, and indeed the whole body of the Karachi prisoners who had been convicted on November, 1, 1921 for having taken part in the All-India Khilafat Conference held at Karachi on July 8, 1921, where a certain resolution regarding military service had been passed. These, as we have seen, were known as the Futwa prisoners.* Mahatmaji was unable to understand why if the Government should at all agree to convene a Round Table Conference for the purpose of a settlement, there should be this marked distinction in the matter of treatment to be meted out to these different classes of prisoners, who had all gone to prison while engaged in the campaign of non-co-operation. If the Government liberated only those of the non-co-operating workers and leaders who had been convicted for directing the volunteer organisations in the interest of the Congress boycott of the Prince's visit, upon their undertaking to cease to take part in such activities, would that be any evidence to show that the Government was really anxious for a settlement of "all questions raised by the Congress," which, according to the joint telegram, was to form the subject-matter of the proposed Round Table Conference. If the hartal was withdrawn by Mahatmaji, the object of the Government's waging a war against the volunteers engaged in the work of promoting the hartal would have been gained. While on the other hand, the Non-co-operators gained nothing except a vague promise from the Government to hold a conference about whose date, personnel, or terms of reference, nothing was known or ascertained.

From the point of view, therefore, of Mahatmaji, the essential question was—Was the proposed Round Table Conference going to be a genuine or an honest conference; or was it to be a sham conference and a make-believe? If it was to be of the first kind, then the Government should find it easy to do two things—(1) Give some valid assurance about the date, composition, and terms of the conference; and (2) agree not only to

* See Chapter V (Part II) of this volume.

release unconditionally the non-co-operating convicted prisoners 'under this new law,' but also non-co-operating prisoners convicted under other penal laws, and especially the class of prisoners known as the Karachi Futwa prisoners. The fact of the matter 'is that if Mahatmaji could once be convinced that the Government of Lord Reading was truly anxious for a settlement of the triple Congress demand; in other words, if he was clear in his mind that there was a real change of their heart, then he would have felt no hesitation in acceding to the proposals of Mr. C. R. Das and of Pandit Malaviyaji.

Under the circumstances, therefore, Mahatmaji felt that he would be affixing his signature to a blank cheque, if he agreed to Mr. Das's proposal. Mr. Das's Express telegram (No. III) was received at the Ahmedabad Telegraph Office at 7-10 P.M. 19th December; and by Mahatmaji an hour after, the same evening. The reply which Mahatmaji gave was despatched immediately after, that very evening to Mr. Das at his Calcutta address, Presidency Gaol. What Mahatmaji said in reply was that in his opinion the date, composition, etc., of the conference should first be settled; and secondly, the releases should include the "Futwa" prisoners. If the Government accepted these two conditions in addition to those already mentioned by Mr. Das, then alone, according to Mahatmaji, could the Calcutta hartal be cancelled.*

* For the exact wording of Mahatmaji's reply see 'Telegram No. IV, Chapter IX (Part II) "Historic Telegrams."

CHAPTER XIV.

PANDIT MALAVIYA'S INTERVIEWS WITH VICEROY AND LEADERS.

Pandit Malaviya's telegram (No. I) to Mahatmaji, dated, Allahabad, 16th December, was preceded by an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Reading. It would appear, however, that the contents of the telegram were not categorically the results of that interview. Probably what happened was that Panditji had a general discussion with the Viceroy regarding the acute situation that had arisen, and that Malaviyaji sought to persuade Lord Reading to stay his hands. But the idea of a Round Table Conference to be convened by the Viceroy came to him as the result of a suggestion of one whom Panditji designates as a "friend" of his (without naming him). This friendly suggestion having been accepted by Panditji, he left Allahabad and came down to Calcutta to seek another interview with the Viceroy, then in Calcutta, along with members of his Executive Council. References to the two interviews with the Viceroy and to the "suggestions of a friend" *re.* a Round Table Conference are to be found in the following extracts from a Press Note issued by Panditji from Amritsar on 30th June, 1923.

"The Governments of Bengal, the United Provinces, and the Punjab did the utmost to spoil the reception of the Prince. Along with a large number of my countrymen, I deeply resented and felt shocked at the action of these Governments in arresting Mr. C. R. Das and fellow-workers in Bengal, Pandit Motilal Nehru and fellow-workers in the United Provinces, and Lala Lajpat Rai and fellow-workers in the Punjab. I naturally desired to take immediate steps to undo the injustice which these Governments had done. But we had invited His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to the Benares Hindu University, and being its Vice-Chancellor I was bound to remain there until the 13th December to receive him. I had to remain there on the

following day also for the annual Convocation of the University. As soon as I was free I sought an interview with the Viceroy on the subject. Just at this time a friend suggested the idea of a deputation to the Viceroy to urge that a Round Table Conference should be held to discuss the demands of the Congress, that the notifications which had been issued should be withdrawn, that the gentlemen who had been arrested and imprisoned should be released and that there should be a truce between the people and the Government, that Mr. Gandhi should withdraw opposition to the Prince's welcome and suspend civil disobedience till the termination of the conference. I liked the idea. I went down to Calcutta, and sought an interview with His Excellency the Viceroy."

The above quotation speaks of a preliminary interview with the Viceroy immediately following on the annual Convocation of the Benares Hindu University. As will be seen, I have referred to it at the very beginning of this chapter. The University Convocation took place on 14th December (1921). It would appear, therefore, that as the result of that preliminary interview with the Viceroy Pandit Malaviyaji despatched to Mahatmaji, then at Sabarmati, a telegram dated, Benares, 14th December to which reference has been made in chapter X. There, we find Panditji intimating his desire to convene a conference of Moderates and Non-co-operators either at Benares or at Bombay, either on the 22nd or 23rd of that month, and further that he would be reaching Sabarmati to interview Mahatmaji in that connection. But after his having accepted from his "friend" the suggestion of a Round Table Conference to be convened by the Viceroy, Panditji altered his plan, and so he sent to Mahatmaji his telegram (No. 1), dated, Allahabad, 16th December. Panditji confirms this inference in his "Press Note" thus:—"Before starting for Calcutta I sent my telegram of the 16th December to Mr. Gandhi, for he alone could withdraw the opposition to the Prince's welcome." The contents of this last-mentioned telegram, it will be noted, go on all fours with the detailed contents of the suggestion formulated by Panditji's "friend."

Arriving in Calcutta, the Press Note says, Panditji

immediately sought an interview with the Viceroy. But it would also appear from the same document that the idea of a deputation had to be pressed upon the Viceroy with some insistence for the Viceroy to welcome it. For, to quote Panditji's own words, "it took me three interviews to persuade Lord Reading to receive a deputation." This statement, however, does not quite tally with what Lord Reading himself said on 21st December (1921) on this particular point. For replying to the Calcutta Deputation on the above-mentioned date, we find the Viceroy expressing himself in the following terms:—"I have no doubt that most of you came under the same impression as myself when I intimated in reply to a request from Pandit Malaviyaji that I would willingly receive this deputation." And, again,—“When I was informed that a deputation of representatives of various shades of political opinion wished to wait upon me for the purpose of placing their views on the situation and suggestion for allaying the present unrest, I gladly assented.”

It appears to me that notwithstanding Pandit Malaviya's eagerness to get the imprisoned leaders out of gaol, Lord Reading had serious doubts as to whether Panditji was really in a position to influence Mahatma Gandhi in the direction in which the Viceroy desired. And this by itself would account for the fact mentioned by Panditji in his Press Note that it required three interviews to persuade the Viceroy to grant his wishes. Says Panditji:—"It should have been obvious to any one that the expectation that the opposition to the Prince's welcome would be abandoned must no doubt have been the greatest consideration which weighed with the Viceroy in entertaining the idea of the deputation and its proposals. But when I approached him I did not find him ready to agree to a Round Table Conference, or to any of the proposals I made to him." And then followed the sentence already quoted:—"It took me three interviews to persuade Lord Reading to receive a deputation."

According to Pandit Malaviya, therefore, the lifting of the Congress ban on the Prince's welcome was the "greatest consideration which weighed with the Viceroy," in the circumstances of the case. Panditji, therefore,

interviewed Lord Reading in Calcutta, and, as will presently appear, put before His Excellency certain proposals framed by him in consultation with some friends whose names are not made known by Panditji. These proposals were not terms offered by the Viceroy, but he entertained them and agreed to them. They were acceptable to Mr. C. R. Das and Maulana A. K. Azad, the two non-co-operating leaders who, as we have seen, were then lodged in the Calcutta Presidency gaol. Thereupon on 19th December (1921), Messrs. Das and Azad despatched a joint telegram* from the gaol to Mahatmaji at Sabarmati recommending the calling off of the Calcutta hartal on the occasion of the Prince's visit on the 24th December. The inter-connection between Mr. C. R. Das's gaol telegram and Pandit Malaviya's interview or interviews with the Viceroy in Calcutta is thus clear. The following extracts from Panditji's Press Note satisfactorily explain the situation :—

"Before starting for Calcutta to see the Viceroy I sent my telegram of the 16th December to Mr. Gandhi, for he alone could withdraw the opposition to the Prince's welcome. But when I reached Calcutta I felt that in a matter of such national importance it was essential to consult such leaders as Mr. C. R. Das, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others who were undergoing trial or imprisonment for having challenged the unjust notifications of the Government, and I knew that Mr. Gandhi would attach great weight to their opinions. They were on the spot and naturally I could explain matters to them more fully than I could to Mr. Gandhi by telegrams. I saw them in the gaol. They were agreeable to the proposals and agreed to recommend to Mr. Gandhi that they should be accepted. It is not correct to say that they were terms offered by the Government. *They were proposals put by me before the Viceroy in consultation with some friends, which the Government was willing to entertain and agree to.** Mr. Das and Maulana Azad accordingly sent their telegram of the 19th December to Mr. Gandhi recommending the calling off of the hartal on the conditions mentioned therein."

* Telegram No. III.

* The italics are mine.

There is evidence also that since coming down to Calcutta from Allahabad after despatching from that place his telegram (No. I) to Mahatmaji, Pandit Malaviya had not only had three interviews with the Viceroy in Calcutta before the latter could be made to agree to the Round Table Conference proposal*, but he had probably an equal number of interviews with Messrs. Das and Azad before they could be persuaded to send their joint gaol-telegram (No. III) to Mahatmaji at Sabarmati. The proposals contained in that telegram, one could see, were the result of Pandit Malaviya's negotiations with Messrs. C. R. Das and Azad, and further, as Panditji himself acknowledges, they were proposals entertained and agreed to by the Viceroy, before they were sent by wire on 19th December to Mahatmaji. Thus, it appears that for two or three days immediately preceding the despatch of the gaol-telegram, Pandit Malaviyaji was seeking interviews with Messrs. Das and Azad on the one hand, and His Excellency, Lord Reading, on the other, and perhaps also with one or two Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, who were all then in Calcutta with the Viceroy.

Thus, we find in a statement to a Press interviewer appearing in a Calcutta daily* on 20th June 1923, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad saying as follows:—"Pandit Malaviyaji saw Mr. Das and myself in the Alipur Jail for the first time perhaps on 16th December 1921,* and we discussed the desirability of a Round Table Conference with the Viceroy on the latter's withdrawing the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Police Commissioner's order prohibiting meetings in Calcutta.... Then Pandit Malaviya again came to us on the same date at 12 o'clock midnight.On this definite assurance of Pandit Malaviya, Mr. Das and myself sent over our now famous telegram to Mahatma Gandhi."

As we have seen, it took Pandit Malaviya "three interviews to persuade Lord Reading to receive a deputation." Probably the first stage in the process of negotiations was to find out a common formula of agreement between the

* "Servant," a non-co-operating daily paper, now defunct.

* It must be 17th December, for Panditji left Allahabad on the 16th for Calcutta.

Viceroy on the one hand, and Messrs. C. R. Das and Azad on the other, with a view to the cancellation of the Calcutta hartal, which had been fixed by the Congress for the 24th December. It is clear that the common formula was embodied in the gaol-telegram despatched by the imprisoned leaders on 19th December. It is understandable that it took some time and a lot of discussion both with the Viceroy and the imprisoned leaders to arrive at an agreement. The discussions with the Viceroy thus extended to three interviews.

In his reply to the deputation when it was received by him on the 21st December, and which ended abortively, the Viceroy is also explicit on the point that there were "discussions between him and Panditji preliminary to the deputation." The issues which formed the subject-matter of these discussions are not mentioned by the Viceroy in his speech, but from Panditji's "Press Note" above mentioned, we could see what they were, as they subsequently emerged in the shape of the common formula of agreement embodied in the gaol-telegram (No. 171). Lord Reading, however, referred in his reply to the spirit of sweet reasonableness that had animated the discussions. Thus, we read:—"It is very necessary that I should make plain that all discussions between myself and Pandit Malaviya preliminary to this deputation proceeded upon the basis of a genuine attempt—I believe disinterested and honourable attempt—to solve the problem of unrest by means of discussions and consideration at a conference.... I wish it had been possible to consider the convening of a conference in the same atmosphere as characterised the discussions between Pandit Malaviya and myself. I would wish nothing better and nothing more conducive to beneficial results, and more in accordance with patriotism."

While these discussions with the Viceroy were in progress, negotiations with Mr. C. R. Das had also to be carried on by Panditji. For a fuller account of these latter the reader is referred to a signed statement by Mr. S. Chakravarty, Editor of the "Servant," and President Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, in his own paper.*

* The statement appears under the title of "A Confession of Weakness" in *Servant*, June 19, 1923.

"I shall now recite what I still remember of the actual facts. Mr. C. R. Das was arrested on the 10th December, 1921. After that I carried on Congress work as his successor. On the 19th Mr. S. M. Bose, Barrister-at-Law, requested me to stay at home till 2 P.M. in order to receive Pandit Malaviyaji, who wanted to see me on some urgent business. This fact was probably already known to Mr. C. R. Das and his friends, because shortly before the hour appointed for the interview, the then Private Secretary of Mr. C. R. Das came to me with a typed memorandum containing certain conditions to be submitted to Malaviyaji. When Panditji saw me at my house on the 19th December, I handed over to him the typed conditions which I had received from Mr. Das. He then went straight to the Presidency gaol. As I discovered the following morning (20th December) when Malaviyaji summoned me to his place, the result of these deliberations in gaol was the wire sent to Mahatmaji on the previous evening, containing all the conditions given in the typed copy except the first."

CHAPTER XV.

FURTHER INTERVIEWS WITH VICEROY AND LEADERS.

Fresh negotiations began with the arrival of Mahatmaji's reply* to the gaol-telegram sent by Messrs. Das and Azad. As we have seen, Mahatmaji did not see quite eye to eye with the authors of the joint telegram. For he insisted on some additional stipulations as pre-conditions to his agreeing to the lifting of the Congress boycott of the Prince's visit to Calcutta on the 24th December. These additional terms, viz., (1) the previous determination of the date, personnel, and terms of the proposed Round Table Conference; and (2) the release of the prisoners convicted for the Futwa† including the Ali Brothers and other Karachi prisoners—now formed the subject-matter of further negotiations, both with the Viceroy and the imprisoned Bengal leaders. In his signed statement,‡ which has already been quoted from, Mr. S. Chakravarty gives the public an insight into what happened at the conference of leaders in the Presidency gaol following on the receipt of Mahatmaji's reply (Telegram No. IV):—

"I went with Pandit Malaviyaji up to the gate of the Presidency gaol. He went in and after a while the gaoler came and took me inside. There I found sitting together Mr. Das, Malaviyaji, and some members of Mr. Das's family. Mr. Das was very much agitated over Mahatmaji's wire which did not accept Mr. Das's suggestions alone, but included some additional conditions, viz: the Karachi and Futwa prisoners, regarding which Panditji said there was no chance of release just at the time. I joined the discussion and said that the release of the Criminal Law Amendment Act prisoners alone would not

* Telegram No. IV.

† For "Futwa Prisoners" see Part II of this volume, Chapter V entitled "Futwa Prisoners."

‡ Entitled "Confession of Weakness," *Servant* daily, June 19, 1923.

at all satisfy the Bengal public inasmuch as important persons like Chand Mian, Pir Badshah Mian, Maulavi Akram Khan. Mr. Jitendralal Banerji and others were convicted under different Acts. Malaviyaji said that there would not be much difficulty in respect of those last mentioned prisoners, but what he was almost sure of was that the Government would not yield on the matter of the Karachi and other Futwa prisoners."

After a recital of those facts Mr. Chakravarty goes on to state that "Pandit Malaviyaji then left to see the Viceroy at Belvedere at the request of Mr. Das. But the Viceroy was so much annoyed at Mahatma Gandhi's reply to Mr. Das's telegram from the gaol that he did not allow Panditji to raise the question of the Futwa prisoners."

In Pandit Malaviya's signed Press Note, dated Amritsar, June 30, 1923, already quoted from, we find a guarded reference to an interview of his with the Viceroy following on the receipt of Mahatmaji's reply. We gather from it also that the Viceroy could be persuaded to accept only one of Mahatmaji's terms, namely the one relating to the previous determination of the date and composition of the proposed Round Table Conference. The other term, namely, that "the releases should include prisoners convicted for the Futwas" did not find favour with the Viceroy. From the same Press Note it appears that Panditji next sought the advice of some of the members of the Viceroy's Executive Committee who gave him the hope that the release of at least two of the Futwa prisoners, namely, Maulanas Shaukat Ali and Mahomed Ali could legitimately be expected on the eve of the proposed conference, but not earlier. They also gave Panditji the further advice that it was no use pressing the matter upon the Viceroy at that moment; and that the better course would be to wait till Mahatma Gandhi could be persuaded to relax and "give an assurance of real truce on the part of the people."

Thus, after having stated that the conditions or proposals embodied in Mr. C. R. Das's gaol-telegram had been previously entertained and agreed to by the Viceroy,

Pandit Malaviyaji goes on to refer to Mahatmaji's reply (Telegram No. IV) to Mr. C.R. Das in the following terms:

"In reply to the gaol-telegram Mr. Gandhi agreed that they should waive the hartal if in addition to the conditions mentioned in Mr. Das's telegram, the composition and the date of the conference should be previously determined, and if the releases should include prisoners convicted for Futwas, including the Karachi ones. I understand that the Government was willing to accept the proposals as modified and agree to the composition and the date of the conference. But there was not the same willingness to agree to the proposal that the release should include prisoners convicted for the Futwas."

Then, comes the following further statement:—

"I was advised that I should not press that matter upon H.E. the Viceroy until Mr. Gandhi gave an assurance of real truce on the part of the people. I expected from the conversation I had, and this was not with the Viceroy, as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad seems to be under the impression, but with two other members of the Government, that the release of Messrs. Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali would be agreed to before the conference actually met. I mentioned this to Mr. Das and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad."

The next stage in the evolution of negotiations, therefore, commences with an attempt to persuade Mahatmaji to agree to the terms contained in Mr. C. R. Das's telegram (No. III) mainly on the ground that "Bengal opinion favoured negotiation which proposed Round Table Conference will afford;" and, secondly, or incidentally, on the further ground that the releases of the Futwa prisoners could be expected before the conference actually met. Mahatmaji, however, was not given to understand what led the promoters of the negotiations to expect the release of those prisoners, although such release was considered by Mahatmaji so essential that he had made it a condition precedent to the lifting of the Congress boycott. But Mr. S. Chakravarty, who had been taken into confidence by Pandit Malaviyaji was prevailed upon to send a message (Telegram No. VII) to Mahatmaji on the

evening of the 20th December in which among other things the release of the Futwa prisoners was put forward as a probable event. But the main point in this telegram was that Bengal opinion strongly favoured negotiations, and Mahatmaji in deference to that opinion might reasonably relax a bit on the question of the release of the Futwa prisoners as a condition precedent to all conference with the Government. In other words, Mr. Chakravarty's telegraphic request to Mahatmaji in effect was that inasmuch as the Bengal leaders were strongly inclined towards the proposal of a Round Table Conference, Mahatmaji should help in the calling of such a conference, and thereby fulfil the cherished desire of the Bengal leaders by not being over-insistent on the condition of the release of the Futwa prisoners, especially when there was the likelihood of their release before the conference actually met.

In his Press Note of June 30, 1923, Pandit Malaviyaji refers to this part of the negotiations in the following way. He says that after having had a talk with two members of the Executive Council of the Viceroy, he had been led to believe that the release of the Ali Brothers could be expected on the eve of the conference but not before, and he mentioned the matter to Mr. Das and Maulana Azad, the joint authors of the gaol-telegram (No. III). The Press statement goes on to record, "And it was thereupon that the telegram dated 20th December, 1921, was sent to Mr. Gandhi by Mr. S. Chakravarty in which it was stated:—'Bengal opinion favours opportunity for negotiations which proposed conference will afford; giving assurance of real truce on the part of the people thought reasonable. Releases suggested by you (this has reference to the Karachi and Futwa prisoners) may be expected before conference actually meets.'"

It will be observed that Pandit Malaviya is not explicit here as to how Mr. Chakravarty came to put in the argument of "Bengal opinion" in his message to Mahatmaji. In his signed statement "A Confession of Weakness," Mr. Chakravarty has explained in detail how he came to insert the above argument. The point which comes out from this statement is that Bengal opinion was

decidedly against the calling off of the hartal on the 24th December on the terms of the gaol-telegram. Further that there was a conference of leaders in the gaol, and Mr. Chakravarty was invited to take part in it:—

"Then Pandit Malaviyaji and myself saw Mr. Das in gaol and acquainted him with the state of things. When I saw both of them mortified at the turn of events,* I offered at my risk to wire to Mahatmaji that Mr. Das was keen on a settlement. Mr. Das said that it would be better if the request could be made in the name of Bengal. I knew that Bengal feeling as represented by the Congress delegates who had interviewed me on the way to Ahmedabad was not at all in favour of the calling off of the hartal. But as Mr. Das was all along holding forth on the benefits of a settlement on the terms proposed by him and was naturally grieved over the particular development of the situation, I was somewhat moved and wanted to see if I could not make matters smooth for Mr. Das by straining a point in his favour, namely, by offering, as Mr. Das had himself suggested, to wire in favour of Mr. Das's proposals in the name of Bengal. On learning from Pandit Malaviyaji that the door to further negotiations was not closed and that a wire could still be sent to Mahatmaji, I drafted my telegram in consultation with Malaviyaji."

Mr. Chakravarty concludes his signed statement with the following, which makes the whole thing clearer still. He writes:—"I had uniformly argued with Mr. Das against the settlement on the terms proposed by him, and I distinctly told him that it would be difficult for him to face the public by calling off the hartal on the 24th December in consideration of the release of the Criminal Law Amendment Act prisoners alone, in spite of Malaviyaji's protestations that Mr. Das's explanations were sure to bring public opinion over to his side. I succumbed to a weakness in trying to make matters smooth in the full belief that the whole matter was quite safe in the hands of

* This has reference to Pandit Malaviya's interview with the Viceroy at Belvedere (Calcutta) after discussion in the Presidency Gaol on the new terms wired by Mahatmaji, and the Viceroy rejecting the condition relating to the Futwa prisoners.

Mahatmaji; and that the tangle was sure to be straightened out by him."

It would appear, therefore, that negotiations with the Viceroy were still proceeding and that all the parties concerned were in anxious expectation as to whether Mahatmaji would relax in deference to "Bengal opinion" as conveyed through Mr. Chakravarty's telegram (No. VII).

CHAPTER XVI.

FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS AND BREAK-DOWN.

Negotiations did not stop, as we have seen, with the arrival of Mahatmaji's reply to the gaol-telegram, where he formulated his two stipulations as pre-conditions to the waiving of the hartal. Referring to one of them, *re*: the release of the Karachi prisoners, it is necessary to refer again to the following statement in Pandit Malaviya's Press Note.

"I expected from the conversation I had, and this was not with the Viceroy, as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad seems to be under the impression, but with two other members of the Government, that the release of Messrs. Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali would be agreed to before the (R.T.) Conference actually met. I mentioned this to Mr. Das and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. It was therefore that the telegram dated 20th December (1921) was sent to Mr. Gandhi by Mr. S. Chakravarty." The reference to the mistake of Maulana Azad was rendered necessary because of the following statement of his appearing in the "Servant" newspaper under date June 20, 1923:—"Malaviyaji particularly assured me that the Viceroy had given a definite promise to release the Futwa prisoners also at the time of the meeting of the Round Table Conference."

Thus, as the result of deliberations with the leaders in the Calcutta Presidency Gaol, it was decided that the assurance regarding the release of the Futwa prisoners should be communicated to Mahatmaji through Mr. S. Chakravarty. His telegram (No. VII) dated, Calcutta, 20th December contained three requests,—(a) Bengal opinion favoured opportunity for negotiation through the proposed (R. T.) Conference; (b) Mahatmaji should be pleased to "give assurance of a real truce on the part of the people"; and lastly (c) "releases suggested by Mahatmaji (in his reply to Mr. Das's telegram, viz., the release of the Futwa prisoners) may be expected before conference actually meets."

Thus, Malaviyaji held out hopes to Mahatmaji about the release of the Futwa prisoners through Mr. S. Chakravarty. That Pandit Malaviyaji had built great hopes on Mr. Chakravarty's telegram (No. VII) is evident from after events. For when Mahatmaji's reply came to Calcutta the next day (Telegram No. VIII) sometimes after the deputation had waited upon the Viceroy and dispersed, it was construed by Panditji, and also by the imprisoned leaders in Calcutta as a definite waiving by Mahatmaji of his stipulation about the release of the Futwa prisoners. It was a clear case of misconstruction of Mahatmaji's intentions, as would appear later ; but the eagerness with which it was laid hold of by Panditji and his coadjutors would appear from the following extracts from Panditji's Press Note of June 30, 1923 :—"This telegram (Mahatmaji's reply to Mr. Chakravarty, Telegram No. VIII) was unfortunately delayed in transit. After the receipt of this telegram Mr. Chakravarty and I again met Maulana Azad and Mr. Das in gaol. They noted down the names of certain gentlemen whom they wished to be invited as members of the conference. These included Mr. Mahomed Ali and Mr. Shaukat Ali, and we said amongst ourselves that if the Government should not agree to invite these gentlemen to the conference, we should be perfectly justified in refusing to take part in it. The 15th of February (1922) was suggested as the date of the conference. I was authorised by Mr. C. R. Das, Maulana Azad and Mr. S. Chakravarty and other friends to place these proposals before His Excellency the Viceroy. I did so on the 22nd December (1921). But he said that it was too late to consider them. The members of his Government had left Calcutta and the matter had been dropped. It was unfortunate that Mr. Gandhi's telegram to Mr. S. Chakravarty did not reach Calcutta before the deputation waited upon the Viceroy. I have deplored this as a great misfortune."

The decision to inform Mahatmaji through Mr. Chakravarty's wire that the former might relent a little and agree to the holding of a Round Table Conference by giving assurance of a real truce in view of the fact that "the releases suggested" by him in reply to the gaol-telegram would take place at the proper time, i.e., on the eve of the conference,

was unanimously arrived at a meeting in the Calcutta gaol in which Pandit Malaviya, Mr. C. R. Das and Maulana Azad took part. And yet we find that a few hours after the despatch of Mr. Chakravarty's telegram, Pandit Malaviya sending to Mahatmaji a final and conclusive message (Telegram No. V) in which nothing was said as to the probable release of the Ali Brothers on the eve of the proposed conference. In other words, in Panditji's own telegram despatched only four hours after the sending of Mr. Chakravarty's wire, no hope was held out to Mahatmaji in regard to the release of the Futwa prisoners generally, or of the Ali Brothers specially, although it was stated that Mahatmaji's other stipulation regarding the "date, composition, etc." of the proposed conference would be agreed to by the Government. This is evidently in conformity with the statement made in Malaviyaji's Press Note—"I understand that the Government were willing to accept the proposals as modified, and agree to the composition and date of the conference. But there was not the same willingness to the proposal that the releases should include the prisoners convicted for the Futwas."

This omission in Panditji's own telegram (No. V) about something so important as the probable release of the Ali Brothers, on which so much hung on the admission of all parties concerned, is made doubly significant by the fact that this telegram was neither an "ordinary" telegram, nor an "express" message; but it was a state and "Clear Line" telegram, whose despatch according to the rules could only be authorised either by the Viceroy or some very high Government official specially empowered in that regard. A reference to Chapter IX entitled "Historic Telegrams," would bring out the following facts:—Mr. Chakravarty's telegram to Mahatmaji (No. VII) was despatched from Calcutta at 4.55 P.M. on the 20th December (1921), and received at Sabarmati Telegraph Office at 11.14 A.M. on the following day, i.e., 21st December; whereas the "State Clear Line" Telegram of Panditji was despatched from Calcutta at 8.55 P.M. on 20th December, and received at the Ahmedabad Central Telegraph Office at 9.15 P.M. on the same evening, that is to say, only 20 minutes after its despatch from Calcutta. It is clear that Panditji's

telegram (No. V) was despatched from the Calcutta Telegraph Office exactly four hours after Mr. Chakravarty's message was handed in to the Bowbazar branch telegraph office, Calcutta. And yet while Pandit Malaviyaji had thought fit to convey to Mahatmaji through Mr. Chakravarty (Telegram No. VII) the hope of the release of the Karachi prisoners, he himself, deliberately as it seems to me, omitted to make mention of the matter in his own "Clear Line" message to Mahatmaji, despatched exactly four hours after.

Mr. Chakravarty's message (No. VII) was an "ordinary" telegram (20th December, 4.55 P.M.) and was received by Mahatmaji at the Ashram at midday of 21st December. When the previous night Pandit Malaviya's telegram had been received, it being a "State and Clear Line" telegram, it was naturally concluded that the conditions mentioned therein were the last word on the subject from the Government side. And Mahatmaji having given his final answer to Panditji immediately after the receipt of the Clear Line telegram in which he stated that he could neither waive the hartal nor suspend preparations for the ultimate launching of aggressive Civil Disobedience, Mahatmaji thought no more of the question, because he felt that the plain and direct statement of his position would give a final quietus to the proposals emanating from Panditji. But when at midday on 21st December, he received Mr. Chakravarty's message (No. VII), he was somewhat taken by surprise, but sent immediately an "ordinary" wire in reply (No. VIII). It is clear that for Mahatmaji to alter his terms at that stage would be wholly idle, seeing that the Calcutta Deputation must have waited upon the Viceroy and dispersed before his reply was received by Mr. Chakravarty, and seeing further that the final reply he had given to Pandit Malaviya's proposals in his Clear Line State telegram, must have been accepted as final and conclusive both by the Moderate leaders of the deputation and the Government.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VITAL CONFLICT.

We have seen that Lord Reading after hearing of Mahatmaji's additional terms contained in his reply to Mr. C. R. Das's gaol-telegram felt so very annoyed that it was not possible for Pandit Malaviya further to raise and discuss the question of the release of the Futwa prisoners. And so he had to content himself with seeking in regard to the question the advice of two other members of the Viceroy's Executive Council. They told him in effect that the immediate release of the Futwa prisoners was not a practicable proposition. But it might become possible sometime after, say on the eve of the holding of the Round Table Conference, if Mr. Gandhi had in the meantime agreed to satisfy the Viceroy in regard to one fundamental or vital matter. It was that Mr. Gandhi must agree to "a real truce on the part of the people."* We have seen what these terms of "real truce on the part of the people" were.† What Pandit Malaviyaji was told by the two members of the Government was in effect this, namely, that unless there was a clear declaration on the part of Mr. Gandhi on behalf of the Non-co-operators that there was to be a suspension of all non-co-operation activities which had for their immediate or ultimate objective the

* Read the following extracts from Pandit Malaviya's Press Note referred to above:—"I expected from the conversation I had, and this was not with the Viceroy, but with two members of the Government, that the release of Messrs. Mahomed Ali and Shaikat Ali would be agreed to before the conference actually met. I understood that the Government were willing to accept the proposal as modified" (by Mr. Gandhi in reply to the gaol-telegram) "and to agree to the composition and date of the conference. But there was not the same willingness to agree to the proposal that the release should include prisoners convicted for the Futwas. I was advised that I should not press that matter upon His Excellency the Viceroy until Mr. Gandhi gave an assurance of real truce on the part of the people."

† *Vide* post, chapter entitled "The Diplomatic Tussle—I."

launching of mass Civil Disobedience, and unless also there was the cancellation of the hartal, the Viceroy could not possibly agree to convene a Round Table Conference on the additional terms formulated by Mr. Gandhi. Thus, it would appear that the previous determination of the date, personnel, etc., of the proposed Round Table Conference, although an important item by itself, was nevertheless not the real matter in issue,—and indeed, the Viceroy had given his compliance with this condition (as is clear from Pandit Malaviya's statement quoted from the Press Note)—but the vital conflict raged round the other question.

We have seen that the Viceroy was agreeable to the other conditions mentioned in the gaol-telegram whose acceptance by Mahatmaji would have resulted in the lifting of the Congress boycott of the Prince's visit. The reader will note that in this gaol-telegram, the only thing that was insisted on was the cancellation of the Calcutta hartal fixed for the 24th December. That would have satisfied the authorities to the extent of their agreeing to the Round Table Conference idea and the withdrawal of the orders and notifications issued under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The suspension of non-co-operation activities leading to the launching of mass Civil Disobedience was not there put forward as a condition precedent to the cancellation of these orders. But as soon as the release of the Futwa prisoners came to be insisted on by Mahatmaji, Lord Reading did not find his way to hold out any hopes of such conference. But the two members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, whom Pandit Malaviya consulted, gave him the hope that the release in question would become possible if Mr. Gandhi agreed to "a real truce on the part of the people," which meant, as we have seen, calling off not only of the hartal but also the abandonment of all preparations for the projected launching of mass Civil Disobedience. Therefore, the vital conflict between Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Reading centred round this question of the suspension of mass Civil Disobedience, and not primarily round the question of the withdrawal of the operation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. And the reason for this is not far to seek. That act of 1908 had been requisitioned immediately or almost imme-

diately after the All-India hartal of November 17, 1921, the day on which the Prince of Wales landed in Bombay. Therefore, if the Calcutta hartal of 24th December was called off, and the ban on the Prince's visit during his further progress through India was lifted, then the object for which the Criminal Law Amendment Act had been set in motion would have been gained, and so there would have been no further purpose in continuing the orders and notifications issued under that Act.

To repeat, the calling off of the hartal was not the whole of the political objective of Lord Reading at the time. That objective came under two heads:—First, the suppression of that part of the non-co-operation programme which was directed towards preparations for the ultimate launching of a mass movement of Civil Disobedience; and, secondly, ensuring the success of the Prince's visit in India, the success to be measured by the degree of mass loyalty it is able to evoke. With regard to the first of the two objectives, the policy of the Imperialist Government was both negative and positive. For the sake of Imperialist dominance, nothing essential was to be done to redress the grievances which gave rise to the non-co-operation movement. In other words, the Triple Demand of the Congress with regard to the Punjab, the Khilafat and Swaraj was to be ignored or minimised. Secondly, the non-violent efforts of the people to enforce their demand upon an unwilling Government by means not of armed rebellion but of peaceful or civil resistance on a mass scale must be resisted at all costs. And the policy of the Government was to have recourse to all the resources of violence open to it, legal or extra-legal, however covered up they might be under the guise of some plausibility or other. In other words, the efforts of the people to have recourse to direct action, however peaceful, were to be checkmated and nullified by setting in motion the whole machinery of organised lawlessness masquerading under the garb of Law and Order. The vital conflict between Mahatmaji and Lord Reading, therefore, raged round this question of projected mass Civil Disobedience. Lord Reading wanted to crush it by *force majeure*, without coming to terms with Mahatmaji, on the vital issue of the "Triple Demand." Mahatmaji

would have nothing to do with any proposal of a Round Table Conference to which he could commit the Congress or the general body of Non-co-operators unless he was quite sure that Lord Reading had changed his heart,—that is to say, until he was fully satisfied that the Government was anxious for a settlement of the triple demand by being prepared to retrace their methods of organised lawlessness, which masked themselves under the forms of Law. Lord Reading, on the other hand, would not withdraw from his policy of repression, and yet would demand that all preparations for mass civil resistance must cease notwithstanding that nothing was to be done by the Government to meet the triple demand of the Congress, the enforcement of which was the *raison d'être* of the non-co-operation movement.

Such at length was the larger political objective before Lord Reading. The other political objective centred round the State policy behind the bringing out of the Prince of Wales to India at a time of active and seething discontent. The visit of the Prince was not an ordinary visit of the Heir-Apparent to his future dominions, as Lord Reading sought to present it before Indians, and before the world. It was definitely a State act undertaken against the wishes of many or most of the Provincial Governors and Administrators, who were extremely apprehensive of the failure of the visit, having regard to Congress boycott, which had been already proclaimed. But Lord Reading, for reasons of his own, insisted on it, and seemed for the moment to have staked his whole political reputation upon it. For if the visit could be made a success, as he wanted and hoped it would be, then it would have amply justified itself as a great and daring political strategy. The Viceroy's political imagination pictured it as an unerring political weapon wherewith to launch a great flank attack on the commanding popularity of the leader of the non-co-operation movement, and *ipso facto* on the popularity of the movement itself. Lord Reading wanted to mobilise for his purposes the undoubted loyalty of the Indian masses. He fondly hoped that if once the general body of the Indian people could be brought face to face with their future King-Emperor, there would be such a tremendous uprush of loyal

mass feeling towards him that it would by one stroke and automatically draw off the affections of the myriad population of India from the person of Mahatma Gandhi to the person of the Prince. Lord Reading was here building on the recent experience of unprecedentedly magnificent mass-demonstrations of loyalty that had greeted the present King-Emperor when in 1905 he had toured India as Prince of Wales, and then again in 1912, when he visited India in connection with the Coronation Durbar. The Viceroy wanted to repeat the experiment and counter the whole popularity of Mahatma Gandhi by capturing the traditional loyalty and the imagination of the masses in favour of the Prince.

The success of the Prince's visit might thus have given an indirect, and even mortal blow, to the non-co-operation movement. But while pursuing the political strategy underlying His Royal Highness's visit, Lord Reading nevertheless felt that the pursuit of the larger objective could not and should not be subordinated to the pursuit of the former. For the success of the Prince's visit with all its indirect political potentialities could not be regarded by him in any other light than as a Government victory in the first round of the political game. Therefore, how directly to nullify and extinguish the non-co-operation movement itself with its ultimate menace of mass Civil Disobedience, without at the same time removing the deeper political causes that gave birth to it, became the primary and fundamental problem of Lord Reading's statesmanship.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LORD READING'S POSE.

In order to justify themselves and make it appear that they were being goaded to employ all the resources at their disposal against the Non-co-operators, Lord Reading's Government sought to confuse the real issue as between the Non-co-operators and the Government, and pose before the world as the aggrieved party, as the party on the defensive, whose one consideration was the maintenance of Law and the preservation of Order. This was a part of Governmental propaganda which they carried on throughout. The Government were on the defensive, while the Non-co-operators were on the war-path—such was the pose which Lord Reading's Government affected. But the real fact was that the inauguration of the non-co-operation movement, and its subsequent development into a movement of Civil Disobedience, were not wanton acts of aggression and hostility on the part of the people; but were forced upon the latter by the acts of the Government themselves. The Government of India's responsibility for the Amritsar massacre of 1919 and its virtual condonation by the British Cabinet and the British Parliament, and especially by the British House of Lords, accentuated as they had been by the enactment of the Rowlatt Bill and by the gross breach of faith in regard to the Khilafat question as embodied in the original treaty of Sevres,—all these had combined and conspired to rouse the country to a white heat of indignation and resentment which would have ended in a conflagration, but for the consummate tact and farsightedness of Mahatma Gandhi, who sought to seek a way out through the channel of non-violent, or peaceful, non-co-operation with the Government. Thus it was that the non-co-operation movement, with the Civil Disobedience development, was but an attempt by means of peaceful direct action to seek remedies for the wanton aggressive violent methods of terrorisation employed by the Imperi-

alistic British Government, and for the enforcement of the triple demand* of the Congress.

Instead of redressing the great and wanton wrongs inflicted on the people, and so knocking the bottom out of the popular movement, the interests of Imperialistic domination over a subject population demanded, firstly, that the whole blame of the inauguration of that movement must be thrown on the shoulders of the people, and, secondly, that the latter must be coerced into submission by an effective use of the arms of repression. The Government of Lord Chelmsford believed that the movement would fizzle out, and that there was no particular need for using the mailed fist, if that could be helped for a time. But it was reserved for Lord Reading, fresh from his high office of the Lord Chief Justice of England, to organise a campaign of repressive lawlessness, camouflaged under legal phraseology, and promulgated as subserving the interests of Order. And to justify acts of organised lawlessness, however disguised, both Lord Chelmsford and Lord Reading but the latter more specially, sought to affect the pose,—namely, that the Government were acting on the defensive as against the Non-co-operators, who were on the war-path.

* The redress of the two great wrongs of the Punjab and the Khilafat and the demand of Swaraj—these three constituted the triple demand of the Congress.

CHAPTER XIX.

LORD READING DESCENDS TO DIPLOMACY.

The pose that they were the aggrieved party, that they were merely acting on the defensive in their warfare against aggressive non-co-operation,—this pose was kept up throughout by Lord Reading's Government. Thus it was that Lord Reading sought to make out a case for demanding of Non-co-operators a halt, if it was their desire to have a parley with the Government at a conference as proposed by the Moderate politicians, and endorsed by Mr. C. R. Das in his gaol-telegram. This pose, as we have seen, also enabled the Viceroy to justify a pretext for requisitioning the forms of Law in pursuance of an organised policy of lawlessness to crush out a popular movement, which was initiated and conducted solely with a view to put a check on the arbitrary, autocratic acts of the Government itself.

Thus it was that broadly speaking Lord Reading's manœuvres could be divided into two parts:—(1) Directing a flank attack on the non-co-operation movement by enlisting mass demonstrations of loyalty in favour of His Royal Highness the Prince, the future King-Emperor; and (2) crushing out the movement by legal and extra-legal methods, *i.e.*, the employment of brute force camouflaged under legal forms and phraseology.

In the circumstances, therefore, in response to the direct and indirect strategy adopted by the Government, the non-co-operation movement had developed in two directions. First, there was the Congress proclamation boycotting a popular welcome of the Prince; and, secondly, there were preparations for the eventual launching of a campaign of aggressive mass Civil Disobedience.

To coerce the people to extend a popular welcome to the Prince, Lord Reading (as already mentioned) set in motion the machinery of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, which made all popular volunteer organisations illegal.

It took away the elementary rights of free association and free meeting and speech; and sought to make possible a popular welcome of the Prince by clapping into gaol all non-co-operation leaders and workers who had been engaged in the work of the hartal. The requisitioning of the Act in question was also intended and was calculated to arrest the course of further preparations towards mass Civil Disobedience. For these were being carried on at the time under the charge of the various Congress, Khilafat and Sikh volunteer organisations, which were now declared illegal by the application of the Act.

When, notwithstanding the enforcement of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act, and the abuse and misuse of the forms of law, and even when notwithstanding the use of unabashed violence by the police, the progress of the hartal throughout the country could not be stayed, then the idea of trying the effects of diplomacy on the situation as created by the hartal dawned on the Imperial mind of Lord Reading. The intervention of Moderate politicians led by Pandit Malaviya opened a way, which his Lordship was not slow to avail himself of, though not without much misgiving as to the ultimate results. For, he was clearly in doubt as to whether Panditji and his coadjutors would be able to persuade the director of the non-co-operation movement to dance to his Lordship's tune, or to hypnotise him in their faith in his Lordship's bona fides. We learn from Panditji's Press Note of July 1923, that it took him three interviews to make his Lordship agree to receive a deputation.

The march of events leading to a new orientation of Lord Reading's policy may be thus succinctly described. Not only could not the progress of the hartal throughout the country be arrested, but the preparations for the launching of aggressive mass Civil Disobedience went on apace, notwithstanding the full operation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and of other Acts, and the misuse and abuse of sections of Penal and Criminal Procedure Codes. Lord Reading had hoped that under the official onslaught, the volunteer organisations of the country, whether Congress, Khilafat, or Sikh would collapse like a house of cards, and both hartal and non-co-operation

activities would come to a speedy deadstop. But the method of legal or extra-legal terrorism and intimidation having failed, His Lordship began to feel "puzzled and perplexed." Speaking on 8th December (1921) in reply to the address from the British Indian Association in Calcutta, His Excellency said:—"I confess that when I contemplate the activities of a section of the community, I find myself still, notwithstanding persistent study ever since I have been in India, puzzled and perplexed. I ask myself what purpose is served by flagrant breaches of the law for the purpose of challenging the Government in order to compel arrest."

And so after he had let loose the dogs of war, the situation instead of easing continued to be more and more threatening, and he found to his dismay that the people, instead of cowering under his lash, preferred to ignore or challenge his illegal use or abuse of the law. In other words, the general body of non-co-operators thought it more honourable to fill the gaols in peaceful individual civil revolt against the arbitrary and despotic use of his Lordship's mailed fist disguised under the forms of law. Then the vision dawned upon His Lordship that the method of intimidation inaugurated by him making peaceful meetings illegal, and peaceful organisations unlawful, with a view to nullify the hartal, and with a view also to make all agitation by Non-co-operators for mass Civil Disobedience impossible, was no longer the potent spell he had imagined it to be. His Lordship was evidently getting nervous, and would, therefore, gladly try his hand at diplomacy, if a suitable opportunity offered itself. Exactly about this time the Moderate politicians under the leadership of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya started conversations with Lord Reading which ended in a deputation that waited on His Lordship in Calcutta on December 21, 1921.

Thus it was that Lord Reading's strategy to stem the tide of the hartal, and of preparations for mass Civil Disobedience, took on a new turn, namely, the diplomatic. He was evidently considering whether it was not worth while to turn aside for a time from the course of repressive activities and to see whether the same objects which he had been striving after could not be achieved by more

peaceful manœuvres. And so we find him addressing the deputation in a somewhat chastened mood, the mood of a humble aspirant after the solution of political issues arising between the Government and the people by means of an honest, frank, exchange of views and ideas. Said His Lordship to the deputationists—"It is very necessary that I should make plain that all discussion between myself and Pandit Malaviya preliminary to this deputation proceeded upon the basis of a genuine attempt—I believe a disinterested and honourable attempt—to solve the problem of unrest by means of discussions and consideration at a conference, and that meanwhile there should be a cessation of activities on both sides—of unlawful operations on the part of non-co-operationists and of Government prosecutions and imprisonments. I wish it had been possible to consider the convening of a conference in the same atmosphere as characterised the discussions between Pandit Malaviya and myself. I would wish nothing better, nothing more conducive to beneficial results, and more in accordance with patriotism. Let me add, speaking not only for myself but also for all members of the Executive Council whom I have naturally consulted upon the situation that has arisen, nothing is further from our wishes than the arrests and imprisonments of citizens, more particularly citizens of reputation, or sons of men of high honour and reputation in the country whose emotions have led them into conflict with the law."

All this, of course, was eminently plausible, and even reasonable. Nevertheless, it is necessary to look into the matter a little more closely and examine whether His Lordship's peaceful professions were supported by his actual conduct. If a free and frank exchange of views at a Round Table Conference as a means of coming to a settlement of the issues between the Non-co-operators and the Government were for His Lordship the whole truth and nothing but the truth, if indeed Lord Reading had kept nothing at the back of his mind, then it was for His Lordship to have explained in his reply to the Calcutta deputationists why he could not see his way to accept Mahatmaji's stipulation as to the release of the Futwa prisoners including the Karachi ones. There was, however, no reference to this.

aspect of the matter in His Lordship's speech. He was willing to release the Criminal Law Amendment Act prisoners, if of course the hartal was called off; but that was all. His Lordship's silence on a vital question raised by Mahatmaji was significant; and yet it was on this issue of the release of the Futwa prisoners that the negotiations split. His Lordship was adamant in respect of the issue raised by Mahatmaji, and that fact detracts from and discounts His Lordship's profession of peace, and his belief in the settlement of disputes at a peaceful conference.

In the absence of any explanation from His Lordship's own lips as to what was weighing in His Lordship's mind, it is permissible to seek to discover the rationale of His Lordship's refusal to accept Mahatmaji's stipulation. The facts are very plain and clear. If Mahatma Gandhi agreed to lift the Congress ban on the Prince's welcome, Lord Reading was prepared to withdraw from the position created by his setting in operation the Criminal Law Amendment Act, whose direct object was the assuring of the success of the Prince's visit through a disbandment of the existing volunteer organisations in the country. But he was not equally willing to set free other Non-co-operators, who had been undergoing imprisonment without being guilty of committing violence. Mahatmaji interpreted it as signifying that Lord Reading was unwilling to desist from the course of repression which he had been pursuing. In explaining at a meeting of the Subjects Committee of the Ahmedabad Congress why in reply to Mr. C. R. Das's gaol-telegram of 19th December recommending the calling off of the hartal on certain conditions, Mahatmaji had added the stipulation that not only the Criminal Law Amendment Act prisoners (to which Lord Reading had agreed) should be released, but that also the Futwa prisoners should be set free, Mahatmaji made use of the following language (reported by the "Bombay Chronicle," December 30, 1921). "Mahatma Gandhi said, he had thought they must insist upon the release of the Futwa prisoners, for the whole repressive policy had begun with the Futwa incident; and it was from that time that the Government had gone mad." Therefore, the suggestion made by Mahatmaji in reply to Mr. C. R. Das's gaol-telegram that not merely the Criminal

Law Amendment Act prisoners but also the Futwa prisoners (including Karachi ones) must be released, if there was to be any conference with the Government to which the Non-co-operators as a body could be a party—was intended to elicit from Lord Reading whether he was prepared to desist from his course of aggressive repressive activities upon which he had embarked to stifle the defensive campaign of non-violent non-co-operation.

It is clear, therefore, that when Lord Reading expatiated before the deputationists on the beauty and importance of settlement of political outstanding questions by means of a conference, and yet would not go one inch beyond releasing the Criminal Law Amendment Act prisoners,—in other words, when His Lordship rejected without much ceremony the proposal made by Mahatmaji that the course of repression must be turned back and that a beginning must be made with the release of the Futwa prisoners,—it is clear that Lord Reading was merely making a declaration with considerable mental reserve. It was a diplomatic manoeuvre which failed because Mahatma Gandhi saw through it. On the other hand, if Lord Reading was genuinely sincere in the avowal of his faith in a conference, His Lordship could easily have accepted Mahatmaji's condition, and the hartal would have been called off, and a Round Table Conference would have materialised. But the fact of the matter was that Lord Reading was not anxious to retrace his steps and desist from his course of aggressive repression beyond the minimum necessary for the calling off of the hartal. The diplomatic manoeuvre to which His Lordship had lent himself thus ended in a fiasco, and he had necessarily to fall back upon the methods of intimidation and terrorism to which he had already committed himself.

To sum up :—By insisting on the condition of the release of the Futwa prisoners as a condition precedent to the calling off of the hartal and committing the Congress to the acceptance of the proposed Round Table Conference, Mahatmaji wanted to make clear whether the proposal of a settlement of outstanding issues as between the Non-co-operators and the Government had any real substance behind it. By rejecting Mahatmaji's suggestion that before a Round

Table Conference should be convened, and in order that it might not prove abortive, what was absolutely necessary was that the Government should desist from its course of repression and make a start by releasing the Futwa prisoners in addition to the Criminal Law Amendment Act prisoners, —Lord Reading showed the cloven foot. He made it clear that he intended that he was not going to let fall from his grasp the weapon of repression, even though he might be engaged in carrying on conversations with the other party at what was called a Round Table Conference. Mahatmaji's view is well depicted in the following extracts from a note he had addressed to Pandit Malaviya, and which had been read out by the late Mr. Sheshagiri Iyer at a meeting of the Legislative Assembly on January 18, 1922 :—"The value of a Round Table Conference lies in understanding each other's difficulties and making allowance for them. Hence my insisting that the Government must change their heart. If they entrench themselves behind their armed forces, the conference would be not only useless but mischievous." The same view was expressed by Mahatmaji in his Telegram No. II, which was his reply to Pandit Malaviya's Telegram No. I.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DIPLOMATIC TUSSLE—I.

The issues in this political game were sought by Lord Reading to be confused and concealed behind a mass of diplomatic catchwords—like Law and Order, of ordered and orderly Government, of Constitutionalism, of evolutionary political progress, and so forth. But on a proper analysis they reveal themselves, so far as the Government were concerned, as revolving round one central idea and principle. It is that the will of the people of India must be made subservient to the will of an autocratic and arbitrary Government; made subservient, that is, to the needs and requirements of Imperial dominance. Under the circumstances the mailed fist of the Government must always be there, however concealed under a velvet exterior. Therefore, it would never be possible for Lord Reading, or for that matter any other equally exalted representative of the Imperial Power, to lay down the arm of repression as the ultimate factor in the governance of a political dependency like India. All that was possible for him was so to disguise his acts and policy under smooth, polished, legal, constitutional phraseology as to help in creating an atmosphere and a situation that would put the intelligentsia on a wrong scent, and capture the unwary among them.

Therefore, we find on the part of Lord Reading an attempt, with the help of the Calcutta deputationists led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, to inaugurate what was termed a "real truce" on the part of Mahatmaji. By a "real truce" was meant, as we have seen, and as a reference to telegrams No. I and No. V from Pandit Malaviya would specially show,—suspension of mass Civil Disobedience, *i.e.*, preparations therefor, besides the calling off of the hartal. In telegram No. VII from Pandit Shyamasunder to Mahatmaji, where the inspiration had also come from Pandit Malaviya, we find the request for "giving assurance of real truce on the part of the people" pressed upon Mahatmaji.

So also we find one of the deputationists in a telegram (No. IX) "earnestly begging of Mahatmaji to respond to the appeal for truce in the larger interests of the country." Similarly also, in Telegram No. XI, we find two Moderate leaders of the Calcutta deputation pleading in the same way for a "truce" on the part of Mahatmaji in spite of Lord Reading's definite decision against the release of the Futwa prisoners asked for by Mahatmaji as a real test of the bona fides of the Government.

The meaning of all this was that Mahatma Gandhi must in the first instance lay down arms,—not the Government of Lord Reading. What would happen thereafter from the point of view of the country's vital issues, His Lordship would not say. His Lordship would, provided the hartal was called off, withdraw the notifications and orders under the Criminal Law Amendment Act which, be it remembered, had been set in motion to nullify the hartal by making the volunteer organisations unlawful, and he would release the volunteers who had under the Congress set themselves to the task of making the hartal a success. That was all. In other words, if the ban or the Prince's welcome was lifted, he would lift his own ban on the volunteer organisations. His Lordship was not in the mood to lay down his own arms; he would not withdraw from the general policy of repression which had been inaugurated. He would not doff his armour of repression, for he would not release either the Futwa prisoners or the whole host of other Non-co-operators who had fallen victims to his policy of repressive lawlessness. His Imperialistic conscience forbade any thought of redressing the arbitrary acts that had led to the inauguration of the movement of non-co-operation with a haughty, unjust, and autocratic Government. The hartal might be called off; preparations for mass Civil Disobedience must cease; but the shining armour of repression which the Government of India had put on could not be discarded except in the particular matter of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, if and when the Congress ban on the Prince's welcome had been lifted. Nor could the policy of Imperialistic dominance which had led to the atrocities of the Punjab and to the Khilafat wrongs be undone and reversed once and for ever. In

other words, the people must not fight against Governmental wrong-doing by any means of direct action, however peaceful and non-violent. The only way that the Government would leave open for them was the way of petitions and representations, and protests in the last resort in the Council halls, the Press, and on the platform. In other words, the Government must be in a position to dictate wherever necessary, and have the whip-hand to enforce its decrees and crush down resistance. While the people must bear with patience those decrees, however arbitrary, if they should desire to cultivate good relations with the Paramount Power. In other words, if the premises enunciated and applied by Lord Reading, and for that matter any equally exalted representative of the Paramount Imperial Power in India, be closely examined, it will be seen that they amount to saying that the road to India's Swaraj lies through her progressive march towards a perfected Slave State.

We must thus envisage Lord Reading's policy, if we must truly appreciate the character of the tussle in which he was engaged with Mahatma Gandhi. No doubt Lord Reading was a finished exponent of the Imperialist State for India. He was also equally determined. But Mahatma Gandhi, as the head of a great national movement, had the foresight to take in at a glance the political situation, and was not less determined as to how he should meet the situation. And as was natural for him, he assumed no diplomatic pose, but took up a high moral ground. In the very first telegraphic reply (Telegram No. II) he gave to Pandit Malaviya's request (Telegram No. I) that he should help in arranging for a Round Table Conference with the Government by agreeing to certain proposals, Mahatma Gandhi summarily rejected them on a clear moral issue. His words may be paraphrased thus: There could be no pourparlers of peace with the representative of an Imperial State, who while talking all the while the language of peace, and assuming the pose of one placed on the defensive, was securely entrenched behind his bayonets, and was trying every moment to make their opponents feel the keenness of their edge. There could be no pourparlers of peace, so far as the Non-co-

operators were concerned, so long as Lord Reading was rattling his sabre, while at the same time his Lordship's tongue dropped smooth phrases and platitudes of peace. His Lordship having poohpoothed the moral rights and wrongs of the case was only anxious to make the Non-co-operators recognise, to quote an oft quoted phrase in the mouths of British Imperialists, "the reality of the situation," namely, the possession of armed power by the Imperialist Government. The Government of Lord Reading, although the aggressor in this war of non-co-operation, had assumed the pose of an injured innocent, and was calling upon the Non-co-operators to lay down arms, if they should seek at all to enter into negotiations with that Government. Therefore, all this untruthful and unreal pose Lord Reading must give up, before there could be any reality in any negotiations in which his Government might participate. In other words, the latter must be prepared to lay down arms and enter the conference, if one should materialise at all, as a co-equal member and not as a bullying superior rejoicing in his armed strength. For there could be no beggars and masters sitting at the same Round Table Conference, if one such should be convened.

In other words, the Government must "retrace their steps,"* by giving up their whole policy of organised repression. To that end, they must begin by releasing (in addition to the hartal prisoners) the Futwa prisoners, and end by discharging every Non-co-operator "unwarrantably imprisoned."† That would be an act of "repentance,"‡ that is to say, a clear declaration that the Government had come to realise that they had been guilty of a grievous error or wrong in letting lose the dogs of war against Non-co-operators as a class, as a matter of Governmental policy. "Let the Government put down violence, veiled, open, or intended"; so far Mahatma Gandhi was agreed. But the non-co-operation movement, as a non-violent movement, should not be suppressed by *force majeure* although disguised under a false legal cloak. For

* *Vide* Telegrams No. VIII and No. IV.

† *Vide* Telegram No. II.

the non-co-operation movement had been launched to set right Governmental wrong-doing in the matter of the Punjab and the Khilafat, and enforce the General Will upon an autocratic Government, which in truth was the substance of Swaraj.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DIPLOMATIC TUSSLE—II.

The tussle, therefore, between Lord Reading and Mahatma Gandhi waged round the central question— which party was to initiate “a real truce”? Mahatmaji declared that it was for Lord Reading, the head of the Imperialist State in India, to inaugurate a “real truce,” not only by withdrawing the Criminal Law Amendment Act and all orders and notifications thereunder, and discharging Non-co-operators imprisoned under those orders and notifications. For, in his opinion, the truce could be truly inaugurated if and when His Lordship “retraced his steps,” first by recognising the legitimacy of the non-co-operation movement, and secondly, by discharging workers and leaders who had been thrown into prison “unwarrantably,” while pursuing non-co-operation work non-violently. So long as His Lordship was not prepared to do this, so long, in fact, as he was not prepared to undo the whole framework of Governmental policy of aggressive violence ; and so long, further, as His Lordship was not prepared to cease throwing the onus of guilt on the Non-co-operators, the fight would go on ; and all suggestions of His Lordship’s anxiety to settle differences with the Non-co-operators at a peace conference was pure hypocrisy, if not worse. That was Mahatma Gandhi’s estimate of the situation.

The strategy of the Viceroy for the time being was to play a diplomatic game. It consisted in trying with the help of the Moderate leaders, under the obsession of a coming Round Table Conference, to get Mahatmaji to cancel the hartal, and also suspend all preparations for the ultimate launching of mass Civil Disobedience. And His Lordship wanted all this to be done by the other party, while on his own part there should be no response to Mahatmaji’s terms as to the release of the Futwa prisoners, and indeed all who had been unwarrantably imprisoned ; that is to say, all who had been the victims of lawlessness at the

hands of the Government. The impression which Lord Reading wanted to create in the minds of the Moderate leaders, who had waited upon him in deputation in Calcutta on December 21 (1921), was that every outstanding issue raised by the Congress could have been, and would have been, settled at a Round Table Conference, if only the great leader of the non-co-operation movement had proved tractable, if only he had cancelled the boycott of the Prince's visit, and suspended preparations for mass Civil Disobedience.

The Moderate deputation was won over by Lord Reading into the belief that His Lordship had really meant what he said, that he was sincerely anxious to play the game. As would appear from their telegrams generally, and especially from Telegrams No. IX and XI, they not only believed in Lord Reading's sincerity, but were carried away on the tide of His Lordship's honeyed phraseology in parts of His Lordship's reply to the deputation, and to which some of them drew Mahatmaji's special attention as justification for their belief in His Lordship's bona fides. But the protagonists of the Round Table Conference chose to slur over or ignore the most important item in the chain of facts, namely, that the Viceroy was adamant in his refusal of release of the Futwa prisoners, although such release was demanded by Mahatmaji as something definite to show that His Lordship was desirous of desisting from his aggressive policy of repressive violence, and that, therefore, he was really sincere in the matter of the proposed conference. The significance of this flat refusal was not realised by Pandit Malaviya, nor by his co-adjutors. They had all been carried away by a sort of obsession that the Viceroy meant after all to settle all outstanding issues raised by the Congress; although for the moment he was not prepared to lay down his shining repressive armour.

Under the lure of such a belief in the bona fides of Lord Reading, the Moderate deputationists could only think of trying to force, if possible, the hands of Mahatmaji. As the telegrams would show, this force consisted not so much in the strength of arguments as in the attempt to coax him into agreement with the Moderate views. Under the circumstances, Mahatmaji thought it his duty not only not to accede to the proposals of his Moderate friends who

had been urging him to call off the hartal and suspend preparations for mass civil disobedience; but he had to go out of his way and tell them that they were being hoodwinked by the Viceroy. Thus when one of the deputationists in a telegram (No. IX) implored Mahatmaji "to respond to the appeal for truce in the larger interests of the country," Mahatmaji told him point-blank (Telegram No. X) that "the Viceroy was putting you on the wrong track." So also when another telegram (No. XI) came pleading in the same vein for a "truce" on the part of Mahatmaji, Mahatmaji had to reply (Telegram No. XII) in similar terms. His words were:—"Wish you could realise deputation put on wrong scent."

Mahatmaji was anxious to impress upon his Moderate friends his conviction that with regard to the larger question of the triple demand of the Congress, Lord Reading could not at all be trusted, even though His Lordship might choose to talk of the value of negotiations in that regard at a specially convened conference. Mahatmaji wanted his Moderate friends to realise that for the solution of this larger question of the triple demand the Viceroy depended less upon sweet reasonableness at a peace conference than upon the resources of violence. For His Lordship would like to keep a tight hold on his shining armour of repression while attending a so-called peace conference. If that was so, he asked of his Moderate friends on the Calcutta deputation, what was the ultimate worth of the honeyed phraseology in favour of a free exchange of views and ideas between opponents met at a conference, such as His Lordship had been good enough to serve up before them in his reply of December 21, 1921. Mahatmaji told them in effect that he could not put faith in Lord Reading's assurances unless and until they were backed up by appropriate conduct, namely, by the doffing of his repressive armour while attending the peace conference. The following extracts from his reply (Telegram No. VIII) to Mr. S. Chakravarty's telegram (No. VII) explains as clearly as words could explain why he distrusted so highly Lord Reading's assurances of friendship and sympathy for the people:—"We are not offering aggressive civil disobedience. If Government means well, they should retrace steps by

unconditionally withdrawing notification (regarding) disbandment (of volunteer organisations) and public meetings and doing partial reparation by discharging those unwarrantably imprisoned. Let them put down violence, veiled, open, or intended, but we must resist with our lives this wanton (and) violent suppression of freedom of opinion."

That Mahatmaji's estimate of the character of Lord Reading's diplomacy was right, and not that of Pandit Malaviya or of his Moderate co-adjutors, has since been borne out by the verdict of events. When Pandit Malaviya issued his Press Note, dated, Amritsar, 30th June, 1923, he had an inkling, as I take it, into the true character of Lord Reading's policy which he had failed to comprehend in December 1921. The concluding paragraph of this Press Note gives a clear indication of the disillusionment which had overtaken Pandit Malaviyaji, and so far, it is a complete vindication of Mahatmaji's judgment that there was no trusting Lord Reading to the extent demanded of him by the protagonists of the proposed Round Table Conference. The note, however, on which Pandit Malaviyaji ends his statement was one more of sorrow than of a clear appreciation of the fact that British Imperialism could not have acted otherwise than it did through its instrument for the time being, His Excellency Lord Reading. This note of disillusionment and that of sorrow are thus sounded:—"I cannot conclude this Note without adding that subsequently more than one attempt was made to persuade the Government of Lord Reading to call a Round Table Conference. The Bardoli and Delhi decisions, the definite abandonment of the proposal to start aggressive civil disobedience and the atmosphere of undisturbed non-violence which has prevailed during all the period which has since intervened, have long demanded that the Government should call a conference of representatives of all sections of the people to understand their demands and to meet them in order to restore normal relations between it and the people. It is deplorable that the Government (of Lord Reading) has not done so, but has kept up a regime of repression for which there is no justification. The Government has made the sorriest demonstration of its despotic strength by keeping in imprisonment the most honoured Indian

living, who is loved and revered not only by millions of his countrymen, but by a considerable number of people even outside India,—the man to whose preaching and influence is due the existence of a non-violent atmosphere in the country during a period of great stress and storm ; and many other Indians, such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Sardar Kharag Singh, the Ali Brothers, Dr. Kitchlew, Lala Dunichand and others who are held in the highest esteem and affection by their people. It has by doing so, alienated the hearts of millions of men and women who daily feel the inexpressible pain and humiliation of this situation ; and it has exposed itself to the reproach of men of right feeling and judgment throughout this country and even beyond it. Oh, the sorrow of it."

CHAPTER XXII.

PROBING TO ⁹THE BOTTOM.

The reader must have seen that the negotiations split upon a rock. His Excellency Lord Reading would not give any guarantee that he would retrace his steps by desisting from the general course of repression on which he entered, even while expressing some willingness to accede to the wishes of the Moderate leaders regarding a Round Table Conference which it was proposed should discuss all outstanding issues between his Government and the non-co-operating Congress. Neither would Mahatma Gandhi agree to desist from, or suspend, the course of the non-co-operation movement (including the hartal, or the boycott of the Prince's welcome) until and unless Lord Reading's Government had definitely made up its mind to suspend the whole policy of repression.

Such was the actual situation. But the rock bottom fact of the matter was that Lord Reading could not out-vote or over-rule British Imperialism even if he willed. His Lordship had come out to India as an agent of the Imperialist Government to give effect to the demands of Imperialism. And British Imperialism demanded that its hold on India must be preserved at any cost. Mahatmaji writing in the early part of January, 1921, when the announcement of Lord Reading as the Viceroy-designate was made, referred to this aspect of the matter in the following pregnant terms:—"The long expected announcement about the new Viceroy has come. But two years ago, the name of the Lord Chief Justice as the Viceroy-designate would have excited wonder and even admiration. To-day the public are rightly indifferent. A military dictator might have answered just as well, if not better. Lord Reading has declared his intention to do the right. But the system which he is coming to administer will not permit him to do what is right. If he succeeds in doing the right, I promise that he will also succeed in destroying the system or radically reforming it. Either he will swallow the system

or the system will swallow him." ("Young India," January 19, 1921).

A policy of force or repression is the ultimate fact about all Imperialism, whether British, American, French, Belgian, Italian, Japanese, or other. And Imperialism is a comparatively modern creation. The greater powers of the West in the course of their expansion throughout the world had to bring under subjugation weaker or ill-equipped races and peoples. The subjugation was with a view to exploit the conquered populations and enrich the ruling powers or their nationals. This involved the introduction of a system of ordered administration and all the paraphernalia of Law and Order. Such Law and Order, however, were tainted at the very source, being the expression of the will of the political masters. They were not the outcome or the expression of the people's will. All that an Imperialist administrator sent out from England could under the circumstances do was to gild the pill of subjection and hide the fact of exploitation by attempting to throw a veil of semi-secrecy over his doings, and induce the people's leaders to believe that the system of rule pursued by the Imperialistic State was at bottom not based on selfish force, but on a policy of good-will and conciliation towards the subject population, or (where the camouflage had a religious unction) on a policy of introducing the "blessings of civilisation." Such a question, therefore, as "Is England Honest?" or "Is Japan Honest?" etc., in their dealings with subjugated races, cannot and does not arise. That question could have arisen between a people and their monarch wielding personal sovereignty over them, or a monarch or a Government representing a National State. But where a people is effectually subdued and brought under a system of impersonal rule whose watchword is the stabilisation and perpetuation of Imperial supremacy and all that it implies—e.g., economic dominance and exploitation,—then a question like "Is Imperialism Honest?" does not and cannot arise. That would be a contradiction in terms. Just as nationalistic patriotism, when it boasts, 'My country, right or wrong,' becomes essentially mischievous and vicious in its international relations, so also Imperialism, because it lays

down—'My Imperial self above the selves of weaker and undeveloped races and peoples', becomes equally vicious and wicked in its ethical bearings upon humanity.

The question of India's Swaraj, therefore, is essentially a question of fighting a system of imposed rule known as Imperialism with its vicious outlook on life. Therefore, it would not do to forget the fact that Imperialism, if it is not to commit suicide, must continue to rely upon force and repression as the ultimate factors of its destiny. In other words, it would not do to find fault with Imperialism because it is Imperialism. And furthermore, since Imperialism is a system of rule, or misrule, if you like, and since it is an up-to-date modern type of rule, it is bound to be an ordered rule, or misrule, *i.e.*, a rule or misrule which must have for its ally, Law. The total effect of that rule or misrule might be, as it must, in the direction of the progressive emasculation and impoverishment of the teeming masses through their progressive exploitation. But since it is an ordered rule or misrule, the whole process of progressive exploitation and emasculation is conducted not in a haphazard fashion like that of the old barbarians, but under cover of an appropriate legal system, and an appropriate administrative procedure. Such a civilised procedure of preserving order and obscuring the fact of exploitation behind the *furdah* of a legal system and procedure is no doubt a vast improvement upon the older methods of barbaric rule of rapine, plunder and massacre. Nevertheless, in its ultimate effects it is devastating to a degree. It imperils the very soul-life of its victims, because it does the whole work so insidiously, so unobtrusively that it takes a long, long time, for them to be aware of the process of political 'slow-poisoning' to which the body-politic is being subjected. If the process of domination and exploitation were carried on nakedly, *i.e.*, without the help of a legal system and ordered administration, then there is every likelihood of the scales falling off the eyes of the victims. It is this glamour of a civilised rule, however poisonous in its ultimate effects, this persistent hypnotic glamour of a rule of Law and Order that dazzles and awes and conciliates and makes the rule bearable. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it unfits the people

to see things as they are by obscuring or corrupting their understanding.

If we have not erred in characterising, as we have done, Imperialism of whatever brand, British, French, Belgian, Italian, American, or Japanese, etc., as a system of foreign rule of an impersonal kind, based upon a system of Law and of regulated administration, casting its glamour upon its victims by its up-to-date methods, but in its ultimate effects destructive of the very foundations of a people's soul-life, and its economic existence, then it must equally be held that such Imperialism could never negotiate with its victims of exploitation on terms of equality at a conference which is to decide on the question of their Swaraj. For such Swaraj would undoubtedly lay the axe at the very foundation of Imperialistic rule under which the relations are those of political masters dominating subject populations. All that the agents of Imperialism could be expected to concede to the subject peoples would be that the former will not under ordinary circumstances keep on "rattling the sabre," but will preserve a decent demeanour. And it follows also that under ordinary circumstances, the role that they would play would be one of showing external deference to the representatives of the people by professing their loftiest good-will to the country under their charge, by professing their anxiety to extend the blessings of peace, good Government and civilisation. And such conduct on the part of the political masters would also be justified by political results. For it would further deepen the deception of the people, enhance the prestige of the masters, and entrap the less wary among the people and enlist their moral support and services, whether voluntary or paid. The convening of a so-called Round Table Conference between the representatives of a subject people and the representatives of Imperialism in fundamental matters of political relationship where their interests are bound to clash, can therefore be indulged in only as a pastime, or at best as a method of hiding the true character of Imperialism, thus drawing the Imperial net tighter. And if such moral methods of hypnotism fail of their objective, Imperialism can always fall back upon the method of setting its legal, and, in emergencies, even extra-legal machinery

of repression in motion with the help of indigenous recruits and supporters from among the educated or semi-educated classes.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NON-CO-OPERATORS' RALLY ROUND MAHATMAJI.

We have seen that in spite of the moral pressure sought to be brought to bear upon him by the Moderate leaders reinforced by Messrs. C. R. Das and Abul Kalam Azad, two of the foremost Bengal Non-co-operators of the time, Mahatmaji took up a most determined attitude against the proposal of suspending the non-co-operation movement, and cancelling the boycott of the Prince's visit. The whole of the negotiations were conducted, so to say, behind the scenes between December 16 and December 22, 1921, by means of telegrams between the protagonists of negotiations assembled in Calcutta on the one hand, and Mahatma Gandhi on the other, working feverishly away at Ahmedabad on the eve of the annual session of the Congress to be held in that city. The general non-co-operating public, least of all the whole body of Non-co-operators in gaol throughout the country, were hardly in a position to know definitely what was being transacted behind their backs, so to say. But strange to say, notwithstanding the secrecy that was observed, rumours had got abroad, even among the political prisoners, that considerable pressure was being brought to bear upon Mahatmaji in order that he might make peace with the Government in the matter of the non-co operation movement ; or that at any rate, the cancellation of the Prince's boycott and the suspension of preparations for mass civil disobedience should be agreed to by Mahatmaji during the pendency of a projected Round Table Conference. Thus, in spite of the negotiations being conducted under the veil of secrecy, all sorts of rumours sprang up, exercising the minds of the general body of Non-co-operators. They looked askance at the new proposals being brought forward at a time when mass civil disobedience was going to be launched in right earnest ; and they had to pass their time in anxious suspense lest the leaders in charge of the movement should be de-

flected from their goal and be victims of Governmental manipulation and intrigue. They were, however, much relieved to find from Lord Reading's reply of 21 December, 1921 to the Moderate deputation that had waited upon him in Calcutta, that negotiations had fallen through.

The Moderate politicians, of course, were perturbed and distressed at the turn of events. Even after Lord Reading's speech finally declining to convene a Round Table Conference, Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas, who had joined the deputation, made a last despairing effort to enlist Mahatmaji's support by means of entreaty and persuasion and by invoking Mahatmaji's "past records in South Africa," and his "freedom from Party politics," etc. But even if this was so, it looked not a little surprising that Mr. C. R. Das, who had been imprisoned under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, should have joined hands with the Moderate politicians in this matter of the negotiations. No other Non-co-operator of any note imprisoned under the same Act had entertained any thought of suspending the movement, or calling off the hartal, in exchange for a problematical Round Table Conference, which the Government could wriggle out of any moment after their purpose had been served. Pandit Motilal Nehru and other leading members of the U. P. Non-co-operation Party imprisoned at this time in the Lucknow gaol under the Criminal Law Amendment Act had their misgivings when they learnt that negotiations for peace had been set on foot, and Motilalji wrote a letter to Mahatmaji from gaol, dated, 21st December, 1921, that is, the very day on which the Moderate deputation met the Viceroy. It contained a clear expression of opinion of Motilalji himself and fellow-prisoners. According to Motilalji, the terms of peace on which the Government were willing to convene a Round Table Conference were "deceptive"; he therefore urged Mahatmaji not to accept the terms in question. The fact of the matter was that the Non-co-operators imprisoned in Lucknow gaol were apprehensive lest Mahatmaji should be misled into accepting the terms as a real basis of settlement.

We quote below the relevant portions of Pandit Moti-

lalji's letter as it originally appeared in "Young India" for 29th December, 1921.

District Jail
Lucknow.
21—12—21

"My Dear Mahatmaji,

I have purposely refrained from writing to you earlier as I thought it useless to do so in view of the rapid march of events. My nephew is going to Ahmedabad today, and I am giving him this note just to say that we are well and eagerly expecting the news that you have discarded the deceptive terms for our release and ordered a further concentration of effort in such directions as you consider suitable. My own opinion and the general sense of fellow-workers here is that nothing has happened to induce us to reconsider our position. On the contrary, everything has turned out quite nicely. There is no stopping now, and we are quite clear that even a temporary halt would be most inadvisable.....

Yours Sincerely,
(Sd.) Motilal Nehru."

Pandit Motilalji voiced the views of himself and fellow-prisoners in the Lucknow gaol. At that time the members of the United Provinces Congress Committee numbering fifty-five were undergoing in the Agra gaol their sentence of imprisonment under the same Criminal Law Amendment Act. When they heard about the break-down of the proposal of a Round Table Conference on what Pandit Motilalji had termed "deceptive terms," they rallied to Mahatmaji's support in a telegram which ran as follows:—"We agree with your views regarding Round Table Conference."* It would appear also that the opinion of the Punjab Non-co-operators as voiced by Lala Lajpat Rai was similarly in favour of Mahatmaji. Lala Lajpat Rai, writing to Mahatmaji about this time, while approving of Mahatmaji's decision regarding the Round Table Conference nevertheless warned him against being influenced

* *Vide* "Young India" for December 29, 1921.

by the troubles and sufferings of the incarcerated leaders and arriving at a settlement with the Government before the time was ripe for it. Thus,—“I have been informed of what was done at Ahmedabad and about the Round Table Conference. Please do not be influenced by our troubles in arriving at any decision about principles. Rest assured we are prepared to suffer for any length of time and in every way to achieve what we desire. Now that we are in for it, we shall see it through.”*

Thus, the non-co-operationist leaders of the United Provinces and the Punjab rallied round Mahatmaji's support in his discountenancing a settlement with the Government on “deceptive terms.” Indeed, they had entertained serious misgivings lest in that bewildering situation, Mahatmaji should be influenced to enter a sort of pact with the Government which could have no binding effect on a Government “entrenched” as they were “behind bayonets.” The same view was held by the general body of Bengal Non-co-operators notwithstanding the great influence wielded by Messrs. C. R. Das and Abul Kalam Azad. In a signed article entitled “A Confession of Weakness,” appearing in his paper “The Servant,” dated 19th June, 1923, Mr. Shyamasunder Chakravarty gives a vivid picture of the negotiations that were being conducted by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya with Messrs. C. R. Das and Azad in the Calcutta Presidency gaol at the time in question. Mr. Chakravarty was then the Acting President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and took an important part in the December negotiations of 1921, as we have seen in preceding chapters. In the signed article, Mr. Chakravarty makes it abundantly clear that Bengal feeling as represented by the general body of Congress delegates with whom he had been in touch was not at all in favour of Messrs. C. R. Das and Azad's joint proposals. The full story about “Bengal opinion” is recited in a previous article† to which the reader is referred.

Lastly, I must not omit to mention that at the time of

* *Ide* “Young India” for January 12, 1922.

† See article “Further Interviews with Viceroy and Leaders,” being chapter XV of Part II of this volume.

the Ahmedabad Congress itself the whole question of these December negotiations was brought up for discussion and review on two successive occasions and with only one result, namely, the vindication of the attitude taken up by Mahatmaji. The first occasion was when on 27th December, 1921, midnight, a private conference was called by Pandit Malaviya and Mr. Jinnah in Mahatmaji's Camp on the Congress grounds to reconsider the question of a Round Table Conference. Mr. Jinnah and Pandit Malaviya argued in favour of the Congress calling for such a conference. Mahatmaji replied by merely reading before the meeting all the telegrams that had passed between him and the protagonists of the December negotiations. Mr. Kelkar, one of the Marhatta leaders, expressed great satisfaction at the replies which Mahatmaji had given to the several telegrams, and addressing Pandit Malaviya said that he could not conceive that there could be a better presentation of the people's standpoint in the matter. The following day (28th December, 1921) those telegrams were again read out by Mahatmaji before the Subjects Committee of the Congress, and when the question was voted upon, it was found that except for one solitary dissident, the whole house was unanimous in support of Mahatmaji. By reason of this adverse decision in the Subjects Committee no resolution in favour of a Round Table Conference was brought up before the open Congress. Nevertheless, Mahatmaji in moving the resolution of mass civil disobedience of the Congress referred to the rejected proposal of a Round Table Conference in the following terms :—

"This resolution, if the Government sincerely wants an open door, leaves the door wide open for it. If the Government is sincerely anxious to do justice, if Lord Reading has really come to India to do justice and nothing less—and we want nothing more—then I inform him from this platform with God as my witness, with all the earnestness I can command, that he has got an open door in this resolution, if he means well ; but the door is closed in his face if he means ill. There is every chance for him to hold a Round Table Conference, but it must be a real conference. If he wants a conference at a table where only equals are to sit, and where there is not to be a single beggar, then

there is an open door, and that door will always remain open....God only knows if I could possibly have advised you to go to the Round Table Conference, if I could possibly have advised you not to undertake this resolution of civil disobedience, I could have done so. I am a man of peace. I believe in peace. But I do not want peace at any price. I do not want the peace that you find in stone. I do not want the peace that you find in the grave."

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

TO KHADI NAGAR AND CONGRESS.

At noon on the 22nd December, Mahatmaji left the Ashram with us, and went to reside at his tent at "Khadi Nagar." He had that morning replied from the Ashram to the telegram which had been received on the night of the 21st, from Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas concerning the peace negotiations. In that reply he stated that he was "prepared individually unconditionally to attend any conference." He further said that the Viceroy, Lord Reading, by raising this question of peace was trying to put the Moderates on the 'wrong track,' and that unless the terms he had stated in his telegram to Deshabandhu Das had been satisfied he could not agree to call off the *hartal* in Calcutta. The reader may remember that the negotiations broke down on the condition about the release of the Ali Brothers, Dr. Kitchlew, and other Futwa prisoners of the Karachi trial. We reproduce again Mahatmaji's telegram of 22nd December mentioned above:—

"My word to you abides. (Am) Prepared individually unconditionally (to) attend any conference. Viceroy (is) putting you (on) wrong track. Tell me concrete terms to be observed. Only (I) cannot waive voluntary hartal till terms stated (in my) telegram to Das (are) satisfied—Gandhi."

From beginning to end of these negotiations Mahatmaji adhered to the terms stipulated by him in this telegram. The reader will observe later on that he did not swerve from these conditions when the matter came up for discussion at the Congress, and again at the Malaviya Conference in Bombay.

CHAPTER II.

KHADI NAGAR AND, MOSLEM NAGAR.

The demonstration of their great organising ability given by the Congress workers at Ahmedabad in the construction of the "Khadi Nagar" will always deserve a prominent record in the annals of our Swaraj movement. Till a couple of years before, the charka had not been much in evidence in Guzarat; but Mahatmaji had brought about such a revolution in the life of the people of Guzarat since the inauguration of this movement that it had become possible for the spacious Congress pavilion and the quarters for the delegates, covering about half a mile, known as "Khadi Nagar," to be made entirely out of Khaddar manufactured in Guzarat. Whoever beheld the splendour of "Khadi Nagar" during the Congress could not but be fascinated by it. On the main road from Ahmedabad to Sabarmati, the river Sabarmati is crossed by a bridge, called Ellis Bridge. From the very end of the bridge, on the opposite side of the city, began the "Khadi Nagar." As one crossed the bridge, one beheld to one's right the hall and tents intended for exhibition of Indian arts and crafts, and for the session of the Music Conference. Arrangements had been made to gather on this occasion all the great musicians of India, and all possible kinds of exhibits of Khaddar-cloth and other art-products. Beyond the exhibition grounds, you saw in front the pandal erected for holding the Khilafat Conference, and to your left was the vast Congress pavilion. The gateway to the Congress pavilion was constructed on the model of a Moghul fortress. Entering the gateway, you had on your left the tent erected for the 'Subjects Committee,' on your right, the offices of the Congress, and in front, the main Congress Pandal, large enough to accommodate about twenty thousand people. This extensive structure, all of white khadi, and situated on the banks of the Sabarmati river, presented a glorious spectacle, when it was illuminated at night.

While the outside of the Congress pandal gave the appearance of a well-built specimen of Indian architecture, its inside also had been furnished in a fashion quite different from those followed in previous Congresses. Till now, none had dreamt of arranging a session of the Congress without filling the pandal with chairs, and other articles of furniture in imitation of meetings and conferences held in the west. But by setting up a new tradition at Ahmedabad on this occasion, Mahatmaji seems to have created a permanent revolution in our method of arranging sessions of the Congress.

Chairs and tables were discarded once for all, and instead on a high semi-circular dais seats had been arranged on carpets in Indian fashion for the President, and the principal leaders. The rostrum for the speakers was in front of the dais. On one side of the rostrum were the seats for the reporters, with little wooden desks to suit their convenience. All round the rostrum were arranged marked enclosures for the delegates according to their respective provinces. The tent above and the enclosures on all sides were made of white khaddar; and thus when about twenty thousand delegates and visitors dressed in Khaddar took their seats in the pandal on Khaddar carpets the whole Congress presented the solemn spectacle of a huge Indian Durbar, literally Indian in every sense.

Emerging from the Congress pandal, and proceeding a short distance along the public road, you saw on your right the "Moslem Nagar," constructed for the accommodation of Khilafat delegates. Though smaller in size than the main "Khadi Nagar" the "Moslem Nagar" was by no means inferior either from the spectacular aspect, or in the perfection of its arrangements. Its first gate was called "Mahomed Ali gate," and the second was named "Shaukat Ali Gate." All the roads, streets and passages of this temporary city had been similarly named after the great Muslim leaders imprisoned in the different parts of India. Thus though they were not physically present at Ahmedabad, the memory of these leaders was made vivid to all minds, and their ideals and teachings served in this beautiful manner as a guide and an inspiration to the multitude.

Beyond the "Moslem Nagar" began the "Khadi Nagar" proper, the residence of the Hindu delegates. Though more spacious than the "Moslem Nagar," it fell short of the latter in spectacular beauty and finish of workmanship. Divided into many streets and lanes, the "Khadi Nagar" contained numerous khaddar huts to accommodate six thousand delegates of the Congress allotted according to provinces. Thanks to Mahatmaji's influence, even the well-known and famous leaders of the people lived in the "Khadi Nagar" side by side with the ordinary delegates. There was a tent at the centre of the "Nagar" which had been set apart for Mahatmaji, where he came and settled down with us on the 22nd December.

"Khadi Nagar" had also been provided with such conveniences of modern civilization as water taps, electric lights, telephones, and what not. Mahatmaji used very often to say that he had specially learnt two things from Englishmen during his residence in England, one, their business-like methods and application to work, and the other, their cleanliness. By putting into practice these two ideals of Mahatmaji in their construction of "Khadi Nagar," the workers of Guzarat won universal appreciation and praise. The sanitary arrangements at "Khadi Nagar" were so very original and perfect that they worked with perfect smoothness in spite of the huge number of people that had assembled there during the Congress.

I have described above what I observed of the outer or the spectacular side of the Ahmedabad Congress. It is, however, not possible for me to present a vivid picture of that huge and extraordinary demonstration. But luckily for us, there is a description from the pen of Mahatmaji himself written for the columns of "Young India", which, though brief, will help in strengthening the impression of the reader.

"So much for the business side. The spectacular side was no less impressive. The pandal itself was a majestic structure covered with Khadi all over. The arches also of Khadi, the Subjects Committee pandal of Khadi. A beautiful fountain surrounded by green lawns ornamented the front of the pandal. At the back was a large pandal

for overflow meetings, where all that had gone in the Congress pandal was explained to the thousands of spectators, men and women, who could not gain entrance for love or money.

"The whole ground was a blaze of light at night; and being on the river bank and just at the end of Ellis Bridge, presented for full eight days for thousands of admiring spectators on the other side a gorgeous appearance.

"The exhibition ground was quite near. It attracted huge crowds. It was a complete success. The attendance was beyond all expectation; no less than forty thousand visited the Exhibition daily. It was a unique demonstration of what India can produce. The chief attraction was the party from Chicacole who demonstrated all the processes of cotton leading to the drawing out of yarn up to 100 counts. No machinery could possibly make the snow-like slivers that the delicate hands of the women of Andhra produced with their supple bones. No machine could draw the exquisite thread that the delicate fingers of the Andhra women drew. The music of the spindle, as it performed its gentle revolutions, is incapable of being reproduced. The evolution that Khadi has undergone during the year could also be studied in a room where every variety of Khadi was collected.

"The Khadi Nagar, the adjoining Muslim Nagar, and the Khilafat Pandal next to it were a triumphant demonstration of Hindu-Muslim unity and an ocular demonstration of the hold that Khadi has on the public. The Reception Committee used only Khadi manufactured in Guzarat, and worth three hundred and fifty thousand rupees. The Committee paid rupees fifty thousand for the use of the Khadi.

"All the tents including a big kitchen and a store house were covered with Khadi. Nearly two thousand volunteers both Hindu and Mussalman, and including a few Parsis and Christians, looked after all the arrangements for the guests in both Khadi Nagar and Muslim Nagar.

"The Sanitary arrangements were a special feature. Trenches were dug for the purpose. Perfect privacy was

secured by Khadi partitions. And the excreta were covered over with clean earth after every use. The work of attending to the trenches was not done by paid Bhangis but by unpaid volunteers belonging to all castes and religions. The reader may not know that the process is so clean and so expeditious that the cleaner does not have to touch the excreta or the earth. He has but to take a few shovelfuls of earth, and with it carefully cover up the dirt. The result of this simple attention was that the camp was clean, sweet and free from the plague of flies. All the camps were lighted by electricity."

CHAPTER III.

EDUCATED HIGH-CASTE VOLUNTEERS AS SCAVENGERS.

The work of the sanitary department, instead of being left to the ordinary scavenger, was voluntarily undertaken by a body of educated volunteers under the leadership of a Deccani Brahmin, who is nicknamed "Mama" (maternal uncle) in the Ashram. The devotion shown by these volunteers and their quiet, unobtrusive service rendered to the assembled delegates by way of the preservation of the health of the "Nagar" was simply incomparable.

Needless to say that these young men had volunteered themselves for this service inspired solely by Mahatmaji's life and ideal. By the sanitary arrangements adopted at Khadi Nagar, Mahatmaji demonstrated that among national workers the highest place of honour should go to those who showed the greatest sacrifice, and were prepared to fill the meanest place. Those who take up national work lured mainly by the idea of attaining name, fame and glory could never devote themselves to this sort of service; for instead of the idea of service their attention would be driven more towards the acquisition of power and authority. Thus it was why Mahatmaji again and again stressed the need for self-purification among national workers; and had been trying to teach both by example and precept how the workers might be true servants of the people. This deepfelt idea of Mahatmaji was clearly reflected in the speech of Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel, the President of the Reception Committee, which began with the following reference to the imprisoned leaders of the nation:—

"Never before has the Congress met under auspices such as God has provided for us this year. We seem to be pulsating with joy when we might have been grieving over the separation of our loved and revered workers. I shall not call them leaders: for the year that is about to close on us has taught us that *leadership consists only*

in service. And if we recognise that great and learned Mussalmans and Hindus are now having their well-earned rest in the Government jails, we do so because they have served and suffered for us, and earned the reward coveted by us." (*Italics are mine*).

CHAPTER IV.

THE AHMEDABAD CONGRESS: SURVEY OF FORCES AT WORK—I.

It has already been described how the arrest of the principal leaders of India in the different provinces created a terrific excitement throughout the country ; and how the spirit of disobedience among the people, instead of being suppressed by the furious repression started by Government, was considerably aggravated by it. There was a strong rumour at the time that Mahatmaji himself was to be arrested shortly before the Congress. On the other hand, an impression went abroad, which though not actually expressed in so many words, nevertheless swayed the minds of the multitude, that by formally declaring Swaraj during the Congress, Mahatmaji would unfurl the banner of Indian freedom at Ahmedabad. A considerable number of people feared that the Government might take recourse to shooting and bloodshed on this occasion, and left the city in panic for other destinations. When all this information reached Mahatmaji, he thought that the attendance at the Congress would be poor. But, as a matter of fact, the huge numbers that gathered at " Khadi Nagar " on the occasion far exceeded the limit of even the most liberal estimate. It was roughly estimated that not less than three lakhs of people daily assembled there. This unprecedented enthusiasm and fearlessness, the indifference to Governmental wrath, and the attachment for the Congress exhibited by the people at large, immensely pleased Mahatmaji. The continuance of peace throughout the country in the face of such provocation as the arrest of most of the well-known and popular leaders, led him to believe that the masses had acquired the degree of self-control necessary for launching the campaign of civil disobedience. It was only a month ago that his plan about starting civil disobedience from Bardoli had been baffled by the Bombay riots. That was intend-

ed to be a civil disobedience of the aggressive kind. And now the Government having declared the volunteer organisations illegal throughout India, an opportunity was created, which Mahatmaji was not slow to take advantage of, for starting an India-wide campaign of defensive civil disobedience as against the Criminal Law Amendment Act and Seditious Meetings Act promulgated by the Government. He, therefore, prepared his draft resolutions for the Ahmedabad Congress making civil disobedience the primary activity of the Congress.

When civil disobedience was suspended after the Bombay riots, Mahatmaji feared that during the Ahmedabad Congress certain Mussalman leaders would join hands with the Maharashtra Party and try to bring about a change in the Congress creed, which was the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means. This idea of peace or non-violence in the fundamental creed of the Congress was the root-idea governing the conception of civil disobedience, and the abandonment of that idea involved the abandonment of civil disobedience as a means of attaining Swaraj for India. And if the idea of civil disobedience was rejected, there would be nothing left before the country for its emancipation, except the ideal of open war and bloodshed. In its ultimate analysis, the method of constitutionalism also is a method of violence; and previous experience has shown that upon the failure of the constitutional methods the people have to take recourse to violence in order to redress their grievances. Civil Disobedience, as Mahatmaji conceived it, was a substitute for war; and he has been striving from the very beginning of his political career in India to impress upon the people that the root of civil disobedience lay in non-violence.

The leaders of the Maharashtra Party were not particularly enamoured of this non-violent policy of Mahatmaji; and it had been widely believed that the Bombay riots having for the time being thrown the prospect of civil disobedience into the background, that party would make a serious effort to change the creed of the Congress. But when they found that an atmosphere favourable to civil disobedience had returned as the result of the

Government policy of repression and the arrest of the leaders in December (1921), they abandoned their attitude of hostility towards Mahatmaji's policy and rallied themselves under Mahatmaji's banner during the Congress session at Ahmedabad.

The opposition of the Maharashtra Party was thus neutralised. But Mahatmaji had to fight against two other mutually antagonistic forces before finally carrying through his proposal for civil disobedience. There was, on the one hand, Pandit Malaviyaji, who in spite of the failure of his deputation to the Viceroy on 21st December strained every nerve to commit the Congress to the proposal of a Round Table Conference with the Government, and thereby frustrate the scheme of civil disobedience. And there was, on the other, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, who devoted his undoubted powers to change the creed of non-violence, which the Congress had adopted at its previous session at Nagpur under Mahatmaji's influence. Pandit Malaviyaji's proposal, however, hardly found any support in the Congress; and when Panditji expressed the opinion in the Subjects Committee that if the Round Table Conference consisted of a total of thirty members, it would, according to him, suffice for the Non-Co-operationist Party to be represented only by three, the general body of Non-co-operators began to view his activities with a good deal of suspicion.* When, therefore, Panditji pressed for the acceptance of his proposal in the open Congress, it was found that there was not a single Congressman to support it. Mahatmaji, however, was exceptionally cour-

* Panditji's exact words, as reported by the Special Correspondent of the "Servant" of Calcutta, are given below:—"Composition of the conference so far as the representation of the people was concerned might not be a difficult matter, since he (Pandit, Malaviya) was confident that if out of thirty members only three went from the non-co-operationist party headed by Mahatma Gandhi Mahatmaji would be in a position to bring the majority to his side. At this time there was a good deal of flutter among the audience, who did not like the suggestion of three representing them in the conference. Mahatmaji replied that the cry for a majority of Non-co-operators in the conference would be rather weakening the cause, because their stand was mainly on justice. His conviction was that three would suffice for a cause like that."

teous towards Panditji, and although his personal convictions were pronouncedly against the proposal, devoted a good deal of time, attention and care at the Subjects Committee to a consideration of the various aspects of the question, and elaborately dealt with the subject in his main speech at the Congress.

CHAPTER V.

SURVEY OF FORCES AT WORK—II.

Moulana Hasrat Mohani was a more difficult adversary to tackle, and was relentless in his methods and tactics to establish his view-point. The debating skill and perseverance shown by the Maulana once drew from Mahatmaji a compliment for him as "a great parliamentary." This was in the course of a discussion in the Subjects Committee, and showed with what courtesy and respect Mahatmaji invariably treated his political opponents.

The Maulana was opposed not only to the programme advocated by Mahatmaji, but to the very principle underlying it. In Mahatmaji's view the heart of the opponent was to be changed by sympathy and love; and for this he maintained that one should suffer oppression and violence at the hands of the enemy, without retaliation, and without any desire to do him injury. The Maulana, on the other hand, stood for the principle of doing the utmost injury to the enemy, if not his total destruction. In the opinion of the Maulana, the enemy should be exterminated at all costs, and irrespective of the means adopted for the purpose. The Maulana repeatedly pressed this opinion of his in the Subjects Committee and in the open Congress, but more specially in his Presidential Address to the All-India Moslem League which held its session on 30th December, 1921. The trend of his speech at the Moslem League could be gathered from the following brief report which was published at the time by the "Associated Press."

The President, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, delivered his Address which was from beginning to end a plea for an Indian Republic to be called "The United States of India," to be declared on the 1st January, 1922, to be attained by all possible and proper means including guerilla warfare, in case Martial Law was proclaimed."

If this view of the Maulana prevailed in the Congress, the country would have been naturally drawn to the path of violence and warfare. Such a method, in Mahatmaji's view, would have been futile in this country. And he also held that even if the method was successful in driving out the British, the various conflicting and irreconcilable interests prevailing in India would make it impossible to establish peace in the country, if violence came to be regarded as the final arbiter for the satisfaction of rival political claims and demands. On the other hand, if India learnt to resist political wrongs and injustices by non-violent means, there would be such an unprecedented resurgence of her latent spirit that even the might of the greatest Empire on earth would be unable to suppress it. Mahatmaji had demonstrated by his political work in India how the power of public opinion, and the latent spiritual energy of a people, could be awakened and roused.

As the Maulana totally differed from Mahatmaji in all this view, he began to contest in the Subjects Committee every word in Mahatmaji's draft resolution indicative of self-sacrifice and self-suffering, and attempted to substitute the same by words indicative of retaliation and revenge. Finally, he proposed in the Subjects Committee that the words "legitimate and peaceful means" in the creed of the Congress be changed into "possible and proper means." This was a direct attempt to tamper with the non-violent policy of the Congress. When the question was being discussed in the Subjects Committee, Mahatmaji maintained more or less a neutral attitude. He even declared in the Committee that if the Congress resiled from its present policy of non-violence, he would be quite satisfied to lead a party of minority thoroughly pledged to the ideal of non-violence. The question was also raised in support of the Maulana's contention whether Mahatmaji's policy was not opposed to the tenets of Islam. But in spite of all those efforts the Maulana's proposal was negatived by the Subjects Committee after a prolonged discussion lasting for full three days.

But the Maulana was not to be so easily baffled. Taking his stand on the argument that there should be a definition of the word "Swaraj" in the Congress creed,

he proposed in the open Congress that it should mean "complete independence, free from all foreign control." He did not then repeat his attempt to substitute the words "possible and proper" for the words "peaceful and legitimate." It was the aim of the Maulana to establish his control over public opinion by utilising that unexpressed hope of the multitude that there would be an open declaration of Swaraj at Ahmedabad on the occasion of the Congress. If the Maulana could gain his point, Mahatmaji's plan of work would have been considerably disorganised. These repeated and determined attempts on the part of the Maulana to undermine his programme of work deeply grieved Mahatmaji, who once remarked in sorrow to a mutual friend of theirs, Maulana Azad Sobhani:—"The strength, determination and skill possessed by Maulana Hasrat Mohani are no doubt very laudable; but if such qualities are not used with discrimination, they blind one's vision, and become a hindrance to further growth."

The Maulana's resolution ran as follows:—"The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swaraj or complete independence, free from all foreign control, by the people of India, by all legitimate and peaceful means."

In this proposal of the Maulana, the words—"or complete independence, free from all foreign control," were the additions suggested to the original creed, which ran as follows:—"The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means." The Maulana moved his resolution with a short Urdu speech, and was supported by four delegates. Mahatmaji opposed the resolution, firstly, with a speech in Hindi, and then with an English speech, the purport of which was almost the same. He pointed out to the delegates that only an hour ago they had accepted the resolution on civil disobedience intended to lead the country towards the realisation of her goal along a particular path, and now an attempt was being made to lead them away from that path. He also said that what was good and acceptable in the Maulana's proposal had already been included in the Congress resolution.

Then, Mahatmaji clinched his argument with the following observations:—"Let us understand, too, our own limitations. Let Hindus and Mussalmans have absolute indissoluble unity. Who is here who can say today with confidence—"Yes, Hindu-Moslem unity has become an indissoluble factor of Indian nationalism?" Who is here who can tell me that the Parsis and the Sikhs, the Christians, the Jews and the untouchables—who can tell me that these very people will not rise against any such idea? Let us first of all gather our strength."

The Maulana having replied to Mahatmaji, the proposal was put to vote, but was rejected by an overwhelming majority.

CHAPTER VI.

BEFORE THE CONGRESS MET—I.

Ahmedabad had no daily paper, and to supply this deficiency Mahatmaji tried to arrange with the "Bombay Chronicle" for its supplying the Congress delegates with a special daily number. But this failed, and thereupon he decided on his arrival at "Khadi Nagar" that a daily special supplement of "Young India" should be issued during the Congress to inform the delegates about important events, and especially the incidents connected with the extensive repressive campaign of Government happening throughout the country. This work kept me away from Mahatmaji most of the time ; but living with him in the same camp as I was privileged to do, I had frequent opportunities of observing personally, and coming to know through others, various facts and incidents, which I describe below in the form of a diary.

22nd December, Khadi Nagar:—

We arrived here at 2 P.M. Telegram upon telegram poured in from Calcutta asking for Mahatmaji's consent to the cancellation of the hartal at Calcutta on the 24th in connection with the Prince's visit to that city. The reply sent by Mahatmaji this morning to Mr. Jamnadas's telegram will perhaps give a final quietus to the present agitation among the Moderates for a R. T. Conference. Today was a "Young India" day, and the paper being out, we shall be at some ease for the next two days at any rate.

The "Khadi Nagar" appears to be a striking creation of the Congress workers,—a new town has been laid out altogether. There are roads on all sides illumined by electric lights. Mahatmaji's tent is in the middle of the main two parts of this temporary town, namely, the "Moslem Nagar" and the "Khadi Nagar" proper. The saying goes that 'All roads lead to Rome'; similarly the roads at Khadi Nagar seem to be all converging towards

Mahatmaji's tent. The tents are made of Khaddar-cloth right through. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj has raised several huts just at the outskirts of the "Nagar," and has offered standing invitations to dinner to all members of Mahatmaji's staff.

On his arrival here, the first thing Mahatmaji did was to help Vallabhbhai, the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Congress, in shaping his Address. Then he summoned us all to his presence, and gave us instructions about our respective duties. He discussed the question of the daily Congress supplement to "Young India" with Mr. Godbole (then Asst. Secretary to A. I. C. C.), and told him he would try to relieve me to a certain extent from his personal work. It seems I shall have to share a portion of the work. A small corner of the tent has been allotted to me; but there is always such a crowd of people before Mahatmaji, and the topics of discussion are so varied, interesting and important that the mind gets easily diverted. How is one to work amidst such noise and distraction?

23rd December :—Mahatmaji got up from bed when it was still dark and began to dictate to me several draft resolutions he intended to place before the Subjects Committee. There were altogether nine resolutions adopted by the Ahmedabad Congress of which the main and the central resolution relating to civil disobedience had been composed by him at the Ashram some days ago, and had been circulated to important members of the All-India Congress Committee with the following forwarding letter.

SABARMATI

15th December, 1921.

DEAR FRIEND,

I do not know who will be able to attend the A. I. C. C. meeting. I therefore send you a draft resolution which I would like to have passed. Will you please send me your criticism, if you cannot attend? And, of course, you will not come even if you are free, if your presence is re-

quired in your Province for keeping the peace. The draft is not for publication at all.

Yours Sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

The draft of the remaining resolutions was complete by 9 o'clock in the morning. Then, there was a sitting of the Working Committee in Mahatmaji's tent which decided that Hakim Sahab (Ajmal Khan) would officiate as President of the Congress in the absence due to imprisonment of the President-elect Deshabandhu C. R. Das. Mahatmaji said in the meeting—"From now we should discontinue long speeches in the Congress; the proceedings should be so arranged that the whole business might be finished in the course of a single sitting. We must make the Congress business-like." In his opinion, the Chairman of the Reception Committee and the President should not take between themselves more than thirty minutes in delivering their Addresses, and the Congress should not be made an arena for delivering speeches, but should be organised on the basis of work. Many useful and urgent points about the future programme of work were discussed in the Working Committee, but I could not attend to them on account of pressure of other work.

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE THE CONGRESS MET—II.

Among the resolutions drafted in the morning there was one which gave a definition of "Swaraj" according to Mahatmaji, and which was discussed in the Working Committee. But this, it appears to me, was not placed before the Subjects Committee. The resolution which Maulana Hasrat Mohani moved on the subject before the open Congress advocated separation of connection with England. Mahatmaji himself had received many letters in support of the Maulana's contention. Referring to this he once remarked to me:—"I do not understand why they insist so much upon separation from the Empire. Why should inclusion in the Empire necessarily mean that we should be under the leading-strings of England. If the representatives of the future Imperial Parliament were elected on population basis, the representatives of India would far outnumber the representatives of other parts, and in that circumstance India herself would become the centre of the Empire."

24th December :—

Since early morning I have been worried by Press reporters and other enquirers anxious to know what transpired in yesterday's sitting of the Working Committee. The pressure of my work had so much increased that my condition became pitiable. Heaps of letters were lying to be attended to. As soon as Mahatmaji got up from bed in the early morning, he summoned me, and in a voice full of affection gave me the following advice:—"Don't be frightened by work. It is this fright that generally paralyses people. If there is a snake before you, and you feel that it will bite you, then certainly the snake will bite you. On the other hand, if you are not frightened, the snake will go its own way without even caring to look at you. Similarly, one must not feel worried or uneasy at the sight of work, however enormous. Uneasiness leads

only to confusion." Then, referring to *Young India*, Mahatmaji said—"Don't think of writing any original article; give only the barest news of incidents that are occurring on all sides for the information of the delegates. You have only to select the items of news to be placed before them. And you may also give well-written, thoughtful Press-opinions." This advice and encouragement from him quieted all my anxiety and fear.

The A. I. C. C. which converted itself into the Subjects Committee of the Congress sat from 8 o'clock this morning, and continued its deliberations till 7 o'clock in the evening. Just a little before the meeting was adjourned for the day, there arrived a telegram from Allahabad bearing the news of Mr. Mahadev Desai's conviction and imprisonment for one year. Mahatmaji was beside himself with joy at this news, and evinced his exaltation when reporting the fact to the meeting. He also showed the members the first issue of the hand-written "*Independent*"* which Mr. Desai had brought out. The outgoing President of the Congress, Mr. Vijayaraghavachariar, is an old gentleman, who seemed to have felt amazed at all these strange and queer happenings. Pointing to a portion of Mr. Mahadev's first article, he asked Mahatmaji a question to which the latter facetiously replied—"Wait for a year till Mahadev's return; he will then explain the passage to you."

Mahatmaji returned to his tent when the proceedings closed for the day. Crowds had begun to assemble at Khadi Nagar even from today, and huge numbers had been waiting outside the Congress pandal for a sight of Mahatmaji, thickly lining both sides of the road and paying their homage and adoration as he passed through them. It was, indeed, a progress befitting a kingly state.

In connection with the proposal of a Round Table

* The history of the now-defunct famous daily of Allahabad "*The Independent*" is inextricably connected with the history of the N. C. O. movement. After the forfeiture of its security by the Government for the third time, the then Editor Mr. Mahadev Desai brought out a hand-written issue of the paper, and after his conviction Mahatmaji's youngest son, Devadas Gandhi, took the editorial charge of the paper.

Conference, some leaders came and saw Mahatmaji in his tent to request him not to omit their names from the list of popular representatives. Mahatmaji satisfied them by his assurance.

Members of the Subjects Committee have asked for some time to consider in detail the several clauses of Mahatmaji's main draft resolution regarding civil disobedience. Mr. Kelkar with some of his co-workers of the Maharashtra party came at night to tell Mahatmaji that there would be no opposition to the resolution from their side. At their suggestion Mahatmaji made certain minor changes in the body of the resolution.

25th December :—

Mahatmaji had no breathing time today. Even before dawn crowds of people came and besieged him, and engaged him in discussions. To prevent such a rush, a fence had been raised all round the tent and a strict guard of volunteers had been posted at the gate. In the Subjects Committee meeting held today a number of Mussalmans hotly contested Mahatmaji's policy of non-violence. The opposition was so determined and strong that the matter almost came to a crisis.

In the evening Mahatmaji went to the "Moslem Nagar" to attend a private conference of Mussalman leaders for settlement of that controversy. With him went Mr. Vithalbhai Patel. From this conference Mahatmaji returned to the camp at 9 p.m. Immediately he called for me, and said—"If you have to go to the Press, go with Vithalbhai in his car." I wanted to take his instructions on many points, but he did not give me time to ask any question. He said—"Now, you go; it is not good to detain Vithalbhai." He looked very busy, and somewhat animated. I was told that the result of the conference was satisfactory, and that Maulana Azad Sobhani did yeoman's service to bring about a solution of the points at issue.

Mahatmaji started his Monday's silence at night.

26th December :—

Today is Monday, and being Mahatmaji's day of silence no outsider is permitted to enter our tent. When a Mon-

day returns after six days of incessant toil and confusion and bustle, the relief that is felt is indescribable. My sleep was broken in the early hours of the morning by the sound of music that resounded on all sides of "Khadi Nagar." The delegates coming from the different provinces of India were going round "Khadi Nagar" in separate bands, singing the national song in their respective tongues. Every party had its own different tune, its different cadence and rhythm; and yet all of them sang the praise of one common country, viz., India. The combination of their music raised a melody so unique and wonderful that the deepest corners of the soul were touched by it. This extraordinary symphony brought out in a peculiar manner the fundamental unity underlying the external diversities among the different provinces and races inhabiting this vast country.

Mahatmaji devoted a portion of his morning hours to the writing of an article entitled "A Model Prisoner." Two days ago he had received a wire from Mrs. Sen Gupta from Calcutta enquiring whether the Satyagrahi prisoners should conform to prison-discipline, or whether they should disobey it. From this wire Mahatmaji realised that the Satyagrahis of Bengal had not been following the ideal of a Satyagrahi prisoner. This seemed to have caused him some sorrow, and he tried to explain in this article the ideal conduct of a civil resister in gaol.

Wrote he,—“Should Non-co-operators shut Bande Mataram inside jails against jail discipline which may excite ordinary prisoners to violence, should Non-co-operators go on hunger-strike for the improvement of food or other conveniences, should they strike work inside jails on hartal days and other days? Are Non-co-operators entitled to break rules of jail discipline unless they affect their conscience?” Such is the text of a telegram I received from a Non-co-operator friend in Calcutta. From another part of India when a friend, again a Non-co-operator, heard of the indiscipline of Non-co-operator prisoners, he asked me to write on the necessity of observing jail discipline. As against this, I know prisoners who are scrupulously observing in a becoming spirit all the discipline imposed upon them.”

Again,—“What is then the difference between those who find themselves in jails for being in the right, and those who are there for being in the wrong? Both wear often the same dress, eat the same food, and are subject outwardly to the same discipline. But whilst the latter submit to discipline most unwillingly and would commit a breach of it secretly, and even openly if they could, the former will willingly and to the best of their ability conform to the jail discipline and prove worthier and more serviceable to their cause than when they are outside. We have observed that the most distinguished among the prisoners are of greater service inside the jails than outside. The co-efficient of service is raised to the extent of the strictness with which jail discipline is observed.”

Deshabandhu Das's sister Shrimati Urmila Devi came to see Mahatmaji the next day, and the news about Calcutta conveyed by her confirmed the telegram from Mrs. Sengupta. She said—“The gaols in Calcutta are no longer gaols at all; they reverberate with shouts of *Bande Mataram* and the uproarious merriment of our boys.” The information did not please Mahatmaji, for he seemed to have become a little perturbed when he heard this.

27th December :—

The Khilafat Conference held its session yesterday (26th December) under the presidency of Hakim Sahab Ajmal Khan. In this conference also Maulana Hasrat Mohani tried his utmost to change the policy of non-violence, and it was reported that his efforts had been successful in the Subjects Committee. But the President, Hakim Sahab, overruled the proposal on the ground that it was against the principle and intention of the Khilafat movement to preach the doctrine of violence in the country. Maulana Hasrat Mohani rallied the Mahomedan delegates to his side by the argument that there was sanction in Islam for the use of violence.

The Indian National Congress will open its session in the afternoon today (27th December). The Subjects Committee held a sitting in the morning. While going to attend this meeting, Mahatmaji found Maulana Hasrat Mohani on the way and picked him up in his car, but the

Maulana got down in front of "Moslem Nagar." Leaving Mahatmaji in the Subjects Committee pandal, I started immediately for the Press at Ahmedabad, where my presence was required.

As it was the first day of the Congress it became most difficult for me to get hold of anybody to help me in carrying out Mahatmaji's instructions. Every one seemed to be busy, and rushed about from place to place, as if the whole burden of work had fallen on his shoulders. But the fact was that the joy and excitement caused by the occasion made the workers lose their balance, and no one felt himself free to attend to any duty. The morning sun bathed the earth with its effulgent rays and invested it with a new splendour in preparation for the great occasion which the day was to witness.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONGRESS OPENS : SUBJECTS COMMITTEE ADOPTS MAHATMAJI'S CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE RESOLUTION.

Returning from the Press, I was busy with my work in Mahatmaji's tent, and came to the Congress pandal at 3 in the afternoon, the hour fixed for the opening of the session. Mahatmaji entered the pandal with nothing on except a loin-cloth round his waist. His entrance was the signal for an unprecedented enthusiasm among the crowd of delegates, and shouts of joy were raised from all sides of the pavilion. The proceedings commenced punctually at half past three. First, there was the musical programme after which Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel, Chairman of the Reception Committee, read his address of welcome in Gujarati. Then, the officiating President Hakim Sahel Ajmal Khan delivered his address in Urdu, an English translation of which was read by Mr. Shuaib Qureshi. The addresses over, Dr. Ansari, the only Secretary who was out of prison, read many telegrams of sympathy. The two other Secretaries for that year, Pandit Motilalji and Mr. Rajagopalachary, were undergoing their terms of imprisonment in the gaols at Lucknow and Valor respectively. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was then called upon by the President to read the messages sent by the President-elect Deshabandhu Das (then in gaol), and Mrs. Das. The proceedings of the day concluded with an Urdu song sung by a girl of the Tyebji family of Baroda.

Then, there was another sitting of the Subjects Committee in which the point of contention between Maulana Hasrat Mohani and Mahatmaji was settled by the Committee formally adopting Mahatmaji's main resolution regarding civil disobedience, and rejecting the amendments suggested by the Maulana.

CHAPTER IX.

PANDIT MALAVIYA RE-OPENS THE WHOLE QUESTION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.

Meanwhile, Pandit Malaviyaji arrived from Calcutta, and at once started activities with a view to revoke the decision about civil disobedience arrived at by the Subjects Committee, and influence the Committee to pass a resolution indicating that the Congress was prepared to conclude peace, provided there was a Round Table Conference summoned by Government. Messrs. Jinnah and Jayakar lent their support to Panditji's proposal. At their initiative a private conference of leaders was summoned in Mahatmaji's tent at 12 midnight to consider the whole question. From the very beginning of the discussion it was apparent no one was prepared to withdraw the civil disobedience resolution passed by the Subjects Committee, and substitute it by a resolution for R. T. Conference on the lines suggested by Pandit Malaviyaji. The Maharashtra leader, Mr. Kelkar, took a leading part in the discussion and asked many questions of Panditji to elicit from him what advantages the country would derive by going to the conference, and also whether the proposal of the conference actually emanated from the Government. But he did not receive any satisfactory answer. Then, Mr. Jinnah stood up, and referring to the civil disobedience resolution adopted by the Subjects Committee appealed to the audience somewhat in the following terms:—"Why is this attempt to drag the whole country towards gaol. We confess we have our weaknesses. Is it not necessary to consider that we are not prepared to go to gaol?" All this time Mahatmaji remained more or less a passive spectator. The only interest he took was to restrain Mr. Shankerlal Banker, who had begun to denounce Mr. Jinnah's observations with a vehemence not in keeping with the spirit in which the discussion was being conducted. Then, suddenly Mahatmaji called me out by name. I had guessed from the trend of the discussion that he would ask for the telegrams

received by him from Pandit Malaviyaji and his co-adjutors in connection with the conference proposal along with copies of replies sent by him, and had kept them ready by my side. After a few words of explanation, Mahatmaji read these telegrams, one by one, before the conference. The leaders present there were extremely curious to know their contents. When Mahatmaji finished, Mr. Kelkar, addressing Pandit Malaviyaji said, he could not conceive there could be any better replies on behalf of the country than were given by Mahatmaji. It appeared to me that Malaviyaji was not prepared for this stroke on the part of Mahatmaji, and did not imagine that these telegrams would be read before the conference, for he never again uttered a word to press his point. With some firmness in his voice Mahatmaji asked Panditji—"Shall I send these telegrams to the Press?" Panditji hesitated for a second or two, and then replied—"Yes, you may do so if you like."

28th December :—

Although baffled in this nocturnal conference, Malaviyaji again raised the question in the Subjects Committee meeting held on 28th December morning. As already stated, his idea was to substitute the civil disobedience resolution adopted by the Subjects Committee by a resolution advocating a R. T. Conference with Government. He said in the Subjects Committee :—There was no doubt that the Government grievously erred in the matter of its present policy of repression. But the Congress was pledged to the solution of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs and the attainment of Swaraj. This was impossible if all contact with Government was lost. In the interest of that solution, therefore, it was necessary to have a conference with Government. It was the duty of the Congress to suspend the idea of civil disobedience for the time being, and adopt a resolution indicating its readiness to join a R. T. Conference with Government.

Mahatmaji opposed Panditji's proposal. He read before the Subjects Committee copies of all telegrams that passed between him and Pandit Malaviya and other leaders in Calcutta, and explained why he considered it essential to adhere to the condition about the release of the Ali

Brothers and other Futwa prisoners. "The Bombay Chronicle" (30th December, 1921) reported Mahatmaji's observations as follows:—

"Mahatma Gandhi said he had thought they must insist upon the release of the Futwa prisoners, for the whole repressive policy began with the Futwa incident, and in fact it was from that time that the Government had gone mad."

Mahatmaji further said that in reply to the deputation led by Pandit Malaviyaji, the Viceroy had definitely pronounced that he had done all that was possible in respect of the Punjab and Khilafat claims of the Congress, and that the question of Swaraj could not be opened so soon after the inauguration of the new scheme of Reforms. If in spite of this, said Mahatmaji, there was a chance of settlement, he would not stand in its way; but in his opinion the proposal for the conference must proceed from the Government. The Associated Press of India reported this part of Mahatmaji's speech as follows:—

"The Viceregal pronouncement did not give any hope of a settlement of those burning questions—the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj. They must go on with their movement, but they must not close their door against any proposal that came from the Government. He hoped the Congress would agree in that view. Expression of willingness on the part of the Congress for a Round Table Conference would lower the Congress in dignity, because the time was not opportune, and the Government was not repentant, as transpired from the Viceroy's speech. The Congress need not recognise anything of the nature of such a conference, if the proposal did not come from the Government."

Pandit Malaviyaji brought forward another argument in support of his proposition. He said, the Congress should at least indicate what attitude it would adopt towards the proposal of a conference if the Government agreed to summon it; and it was for that purpose, if for nothing else, that the proposal should be placed before the Congress. Mahatmaji's reply to this point was as follows:—

"There was nothing in the Viceregal pronouncement to indicate that any response was expected from the Congress,

nor was there anything in the congress resolution which barred the door in the face of the conference. They must give an indication of a change of heart. There was nothing in the Viceregal pronouncement to inspire Mahatmaji with confidence. The Viceroy said, in effect, and in so many words, that regarding the Punjab and Khilafat he was either helpless, or nothing more was possible ; and as regards Swaraj, the Viceroy said that they had been given Reforms only last year, and those Reforms had not been fully tested. So that, here too, said Mahatmaji, there was not much to be gained. But it has been urged by friends that when they went to the conference they might be able to soften the heart of the Government, and might be able to secure something probably. He did not want to throw away any such chance, but it was not for the Congress to consider such chances. Was the Congress to go upon a mere hope of securing something probably ? It would be like catching at a straw,—and who caught at a straw ?—asked Mahatmaji, and answered it himself by saying that it was one who was about to be drowned. But certainly the position of the Congress today was infinitely better." (*Bombay Chronicle*, 30th December, 1921).

Even after this convincing reply from Mahatmaji, Panditji got up and expatiated before the Committee about the beauty and glory of a conference with Government, and made an eloquent appeal to the members to accept his proposal. Mahatmaji's final reply to Panditji was brief. He said,—“You have given a patient and respectful hearing to what Panditji said ; and you have heard my opinion also. I do not desire to place before the Committee any other argument against Panditji, because you know any difference of opinion with him gives me as much pain as the separation of a limb from the body. I, therefore, place the question before the Committee for its decision.” When votes were taken, it was found that except one member there was none in the Committee to support Panditji.

CHAPTER X.

THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE RESOLUTION AT THE OPEN CONGRESS.

28th December:—

On the 28th the Congress commenced its proceedings at 2 p.m. After a few songs, several fresh telegrams of sympathy were read by Dr. Ansari. Then, Hakim Saheb called upon Mahatmaji to move the main resolution. When he went to the rostrum an unprecedented enthusiasm was created among the delegates and visitors, and the gaze of the whole assembly was fixed upon him.

This excitement continued for a few minutes; then suddenly there was a dead silence. At the outset Mahatmaji read the clauses of that long resolution one by one, and translated them into Hindi for the edification of those who could not understand English. Then, he delivered two speeches, one in Hindi and the other in English. The Hindi speech was devoted mainly to an exposition of the policy of non-violence. It was true, he said, that the ideal of non-violence was ordinarily pursued in the spiritual sphere, but under the circumstances in which India was placed, there must be an application of that principle in politics also, if there was to be any political advancement for the country. So long as Swaraj was not attained Congress workers should go on with their present activities, and preserve the peace of the country. They must be non-violent not merely in deed, but also in intent. It was not enough that they observed only physical non-violence; they must also control their tongues; in fact, they must purify their tongues. He said—"Let me declare to you my conviction that if you are sincere in your desire that India should attain Swaraj by your efforts, you cannot but bind yourself by the several pledges that form part of this resolution."

Then, he explained why, according to him, it was impossible for India to attain Swaraj unless the policy of

non-violence was adopted and followed. He said, by no other means would it be possible to establish unity among Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and other communities that inhabit this vast country. 'Mad Hindus' would say, the Musalmans could never be trusted, because they destroyed our Somnath temple; and 'mad Mussalmans' would similarly say that they must make common cause with their co-religionists in Afghanistan in order to maintain their separate identity and existence. He, therefore, pointed out that if the people renounced the path of non-violence, peace would never return to this country. He asked the delegates to deeply ponder over the present condition of Hindusthan, and never to imagine that they could do anything by the power of their sword. He warned them that in that case, the Parsis and Christians would think that they were happy and peaceful under British rule, and would go to make common cause with the British.

In conclusion, Mahatmaji addressed a few words specially to those who had enlisted themselves as national volunteers under the Congress pledge. He said—"You must not think that since you are prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault or even death in pursuit of your goal, you have taken the most extreme vow for the sake of your country. Because there is another, and a more difficult condition which you must observe in order to bring the struggle to a successful conclusion. It is that you must not nurse anger in your hearts when suffering imprisonment or assault at the hands of Government. You must know how to restrain your anger, if you desire to maintain non-violence in action for any length of time. Hasrat Ali, the hero of Islam, was once spat upon by an adversary; and it is my conviction that if he had not restrained his anger at the time Islam would not have maintained its unbroken career of progress up to the present time. This is our ancient and time-honoured method of dealing with an opponent. I assure you, it would not amount to suicide to embrace death for the sake of India, without attempting to kill your adversary. Suicide is a grievous sin, both according to Hinduism and Islam. But Hinduism sanctions suicide in particular cases; for instance, it would advise

a person to drown himself rather than violate a woman. In a case like this even suicide becomes a commendable act. If Shaikat Ali had been here, he would have said—'We must die for Swaraj; we must renounce our all, even wife and children, for Swaraj? And I sincerely believe that to be able to do all this for achieving Swaraj, was nothing strange or superhuman.'

In his English speech Mahatmaji said nothing about non-violence, but confined his remarks to an exposition of the inwardness of the main resolution about civil disobedience. His point was that till only a few days ago the people of India had been leading a life of helpless dependence upon the Government, unable to assert themselves for remedying the wrongs and oppression inflicted upon them by their rulers. And when they devised the moral weapon of non-violent non-co-operation for their protection and political growth, the Government began to repress them with an iron hand, and dubbed the policy with the dignified name of preservation of Law and Order. It behoved the Congress now to find out methods to meet the Government attack. Declared he—

"If you have at all followed the course, the downward course, that the repressive policy of the Government has been taking, you can only come to the conclusion that the Subjects Committee has rightly come to this resolution, and that the only answer that a self-respecting nation can return to the Viceregal pronouncements and to the repression that is overtaking the land, is the course mapped out in this resolution."

And, then, he said—"I want this assembly to understand the bearing of this resolution. This resolution means that we have outgrown the stage of helplessness and dependence upon any body. This resolution means that the nation through its representatives is determined to have its own way without the assistance of any single human being on earth, and with the help of only God above."

Thus explaining the civil disobedience aspect of the resolution, Mahatmaji proceeded to discuss the question of a Round Table Conference, and how it was affected by the adoption of the present resolution by the Congress. His first point was that it was derogatory to the Congress under

the circumstances existing at that time to approach the Government with the proposal of a conference. He maintained that the proposal should proceed from the Government, in which case there was nothing in the resolution under consideration to prevent its consideration by the All-India Congress Committee. He, therefore, stated in his speech that "if Lord Reading means well," the adoption by the Congress of the civil disobedience resolution did not close the door for negotiations once for all, inasmuch as the Government could summon a conference whenever it desired to do so. "But if he means ill," however much he might repress the Non-co-operators, they would never approach him for a conference with bended knees. Mahatmaji's actual words are given below :—

"This resolution, if the Government sincerely wants an open door, leaves the door wide open for it. If this Government is sincerely anxious to do justice, if Lord Reading has really come to India to do justice and nothing less—and we want nothing more—I inform him from this platform with God as my witness, with all the earnestness I can command, that he has got an open door in this resolution *if he means well*. But the door is closed in his face *if he means ill*, no matter how many people go to their graves, no matter what wild career this repression is to go through."

"There is every chance," continued he, "for Lord Reading to hold a Round Table Conference ; but it must be a real conference. If he wants a conference at a table where only equals are to sit, and where there is not to be a single beggar, then there is an open door, and that door will always remain open."

Mahatmaji's contention was that so long as the Government depended upon its superior brute-force to impose its will upon the Indian people, it would not be able to view the triple demand of the Congress with the eyes of reason and justice, or grant an equality of status to the Indian representatives. A conference summoned under such circumstances might be well enough to register the decrees of the Government, but was bound to be ineffectual so far as the satisfaction of the claims and grievances of the people was concerned.

“God only knows if I could possibly advise you to go to the Round Table Conference, if I could possibly advise you not to undertake this resolution of civil disobedience, I would have done so.” With these solemn words Mahatmaji concluded his observations on the proposed conference. He did not reject the proposal, in the shape in which it was intended to be placed before the Congress by Pandit Malaviyaji, out of sheer obstinacy, or without the consideration demanded by the gravity of the question. At that time Mahatmaji himself and the general body of Non-co-operators were under the impression that the proposal was raised at the instigation of Government merely as a diplomatic move, and that Pandit Malaviya was an instrument in the hands of Lord Reading in playing upon the credulity of the politicians of the Moderate school. Mahatmaji’s whole soul rose in protest against such dealing, and he broke out in a voice of thunder—

“No matter what you do, no matter how you repress us, we shall one day wring reluctant repentance from you.”

And, then, in a roaring voice, he continued—

“This resolution is a challenge to authority that is enthroned on arrogance. It is a challenge to the authority which disregards the considered opinion of millions of thinking human beings. It is an humble, an irrevocable challenge.....

“I am a man of peace. I believe in peace. But I do not want peace at any price. I do not want the peace that you find in a stone. I do not want the peace that you find in the grave,” etc.

The uncommon vehemence and force with which Mahatmaji uttered these words made it appear as if his whole bosom was being rent assunder. His appearance of wrathful indignation, and loud, thundering voice produced a sort of tremor among the audience; it seemed as if the earth shook at the time; and the whole assembly remained stunned and spell-bound for a few minutes after he had closed that unique and unforgettable oration.

The resolution was seconded by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, and other well known leaders, after which it was accepted by the Congress amidst a wild scene of joy and enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER EVENTS: MAHATMAJI'S WARNING TO DELEGATES.

I left the pandal immediately under pressure of my own duties. The whole of "Khadi Nagar" was then resounding with shouts of "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi" from the lips of more than a lakh of people that crowded the streets near the Congress pandal. Then, when the sun was about to set, and finding that Mahatmaji had not returned to the tent, I went out searching for him from place to place, and at last found him in the pandal erected for holding the Subjects Committee engaged in selecting members for the Working Committee for next year. The question of a successor to Pandit Motilalji as the working Secretary of the Congress was being discussed, when Mahatmaji said—"Of all the names suggested, Vithalbhai (V. J. Patel) is the ablest; he should fill up this post." A certain member raised an objection by saying that Vithalbhai had not accepted Mahatmaji's programme or views, and that it might be difficult for Mahatmaji to work with him. With a few nods to his head and smiling lips, Mahatmaji answered—"Oh, yes, I shall carry on beautifully with Vithalbhai. If he gives me trouble, he will find me a most willing victim to suffer it."

29th December :—

Early in the morning Mahatmaji called me, and said—"the daily supplement of Young India may now be stopped." Then, picking up a copy of the paper in front of him he began to praise me for giving him relief during the Congress. I was feeling ashamed of the low standard maintained in those issues, and had been feeling nervous that I could be taken to task by him. But, on the contrary, he praised and encouraged me. This is how he inspires his workers with confidence in themselves, and moulds them into fit instruments in his hands.

From early morning his tent was surrounded on all sides by thousands of people, who even at a glimpse of him from a distance raised tumultuous shouts of "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi." The noise, hubbub and shouts, all tended to produce confusion in one's brain. At about 9 A.M. Mahatmaji went out to meet the delegates of the different provinces in their respective camps in different parts of "Khadi Nagar" to explain to them how they were to carry out the instructions of the Ahmedabad Congress. He told them that the time was not ripe for starting aggressive civil disobedience. They were to do nothing but to enlist themselves as volunteers and hold meetings in disobedience of the notifications and proclamations issued by the authorities. When the time would be propitious for starting aggressive civil disobedience, he would do so under his own direct supervision and guidance. He warned the delegates that the idea of civil disobedience was his own discovery, and he claimed himself to be the only expert as to how it should be applied to Indian politics. It would not be proper or prudent for any one else to play with it, if the country's future was not to be jeopardised by a mishandling of the situation. Finally, he made it clear to the delegates that if there was a fresh outbreak of violence in any part of the country, the progress made by them would be lost. It was for that reason, he said, that he had made the terms of the volunteers' pledge in the Congress resolution more exacting and more stringent. He appealed to those who could not agree to those conditions wholeheartedly not to join the volunteer organisations. For, he said, he believed it was possible to gain Swaraj with a handful of men truly inspired by the ideal of non-violence. But that if he had lakhs of people who had no such faith, he would be unable to do anything.

In the conference with the delegates from Bengal, he advised them to give up party-feeling, mutual jealousy or bitterness, and cherish good feeling even for those who were opposed to their views, and requested the practising lawyers not to be office-bearers in the Congress organisation.

In the evening, there was a sitting of the Working Committee in Mahatmaji's tent. News was brought to the meeting that Pandit Malaviyaji, and Messrs. Jhansir

and Reza Ali had been canvassing for signatures to a joint manifesto to be issued by them opposing the civil disobedience resolution of the Congress. It was decided that in case the manifesto was issued Mahatmajī should publish a reply on behalf of the Working Committee. In another meeting of the Working Committee held on 30th December it was decided that there should be two classes of volunteers, one representing those who would devote their whole time to Congress work, and the other consisting of a group of reserved volunteers. The members of this last group would be ordinarily engaged in their own avocations and pursuits, but would be prepared to give up all their private activities when called up by the Congress to do so. On the same day (30th December) at about 4 P.M. Pandit Malaviyaji came, and had a long, private interview with Mahatmajī. We stayed at "Khadi Nagar" for one day more, and returned to the Ashram with Mahatmajī on the evening of 31st December (1921).

CHAPTER XII.

BACK AT THE ASHRAM.

Returning from "Khadi Nagar", Mahatmaji stayed at the Ashram till 12th January (1922). There he signed the new volunteers' pledge sketched by the Ahmedabad Congress. He began to encourage all members of the Ashram, men and women, to sign it. He used to say when the people of India would be able to accept that pledge out of a genuine conviction, Swaraj would be theirs for the mere asking.

The guests who had come to the Ashram in connection with the Congress began to leave for their respective places one by one. Mrs. Motilal Nehru left on 4th January accompanied by other members of the family. She had been living an austere life since the imprisonment of her dearly loved husband and son. Mahatmaji asked her one of these days whether she was sorry for the imprisonments of Pandit Motilalji and Pandit Jawaharlal. She replied—"They have done their duty. This is really a source of happiness to me. I have realised that without such sacrifice and suffering, there is no hope for India."

Mons. Paul Richard, a French thinker and writer had put up near our tent at "Khadi Nagar" during the Congress, and after the Congress came over and stayed at the Ashram for a number of days. He used regularly to join the Ashram prayer early in the morning at 4 A.M., and again in the evening. He used also to accompany Mahatmaji during his daily walks, and discuss various subjects with him. On 6th January (Friday) Mahatmaji invited Mons. Richard to his room immediately after the morning prayer at 4 A.M. They had discussion on a variety of subjects, but I could not give attention to their talks on account of my own pre-occupations. Once casually I heard Mons. Richard asking Mahatmaji—"What is your idea about the advent of a Redeemer?" Mahatmaji replied—"He neither believed nor disbelieved in the probability of such an advent. He

looked upon himself as a physician whose business was to diagnose the diseases of individuals and society, and apply appropriate remedies to cure them. In his opinion, his duty ended there, and he had never thought about anything else."

Pandit Malaviyaji, and Messrs. Jinnah and Jayakar had in the meantime summoned a conference of all political parties at Bombay to be held on the 14th and 15th of January, 1922 to find out means for bringing about a Round Table Conference with Government, and thereby allay the excitement among the people on the one hand, and put a stop to Government repression on the other. A very respectable emissary came on their behalf to see Mahatmaji on 7th January and ascertain from him whether he would attend the conference. Mahatmaji agreed to do so.

While at the Ashram this time, I noticed several traits of Mahatmaji's character, which I describe below.

After the very great strain and labour of the Congress days it was but natural that he should take some rest. On 1st January afternoon he was taking a short repose, and directed me to do a certain thing; but at the very next moment he got up with a sudden jerk of the body, and said—"No, it is not good to be idle," and began to do the work himself. He did not allow me to do it lest he should thereby forward his idleness. He used to say, every now and then—"I am every inch a soldier." This ordinary saying of his would give one an indication as to wherein lay the root of this extraordinary spirit of self-dependence.

I used frequently to select and read before him reports from newspapers which had some bearing on the movement of non-co-operation. The well-known scientist of Bengal, Dr. P. C. Ray, before finally casting in his lot as a propagandist for Charka and Khaddar had published an article in the papers greatly appreciating the economic value of Khaddar for the Indian masses, which I read before Mahatmaji. He was very much pleased with the article, and kept it carefully in his file. In that connection I read also a cutting from the "Manchester Guardian" which recorded the effect of the boycott-agitation in India upon the cotton-industry of Lancashire. It described how several cotton

mills had to be closed down resulting in great inconvenience and suffering to the labouring classes. For an advocate of the boycott-agitation in India, this was certainly encouraging news. But instead of showing any enthusiasm over the information, Mahatmaji remained absolutely mute. The tale of suffering of the British labourers seemed to have touched a sympathetic chord in his heart. He was, indeed, devoting his entire time and energies to spreading the message of Khaddar as the only remedy for curing the economic distress of the helpless and down-trodden millions of India ; and yet his conduct on this occasion showed me as in a flash that he was no enemy of the British labourer.

During the days of our stay at "Khadi Nagar," heaps of letters had accumulated at the Ashram, which required some three or four days of labour to be properly arranged and mastered. Mahatmaji was receiving at that time daily letters and reports from all parts of India giving terrible details of Government repression. On 2nd January, Monday, during his silence, he passed the following written direction to me :

"Under the heading 'Gleanings from the New Unregistered Independent' collect apposite extracts for Young India both from the leaders and news."

And, then, quickly came another direction :—

"You may prepare a digest of the convictions and interesting paras in the reports."

The circulation of "Young India" began to swell every week by leaps and bounds. On the 3rd January, Mahatmaji asked me not to devote so much time to correspondence work, and to give more time to the work of "Young India," his intention being, as he told me, to train up several workers so that the paper might continue even during his imprisonment. He said the Government would be forced to arrest him in the course of a month or two, or in the alternative to "surrender" to the people. Then, he again said—"If you don't want to think about the future, or to be tied down to "Young India" in my absence, nothing will stand in your way. But just now you must try to relieve me of my worry, and some amount of labour."

I take this opportunity of recording what I noticed about Mahatmaji's method of writing "Young India." He used to receive every day numerous reports and letters from all parts of India, which presented before him as in a mirror the condition of the country. If any problem or question suggested itself to him from this correspondence, he wrote out his answer in the form of an article. Similarly, if in the course of conversation or discussion with any body, he felt that a particular point should be explained or elaborated for public understanding, he would immediately write out his point of view. Thus, almost every one of his articles had some practical bearing ; and I never found him indulging in a writing based merely on theoretical arguments and reasonings.

His style of writing was not analytical ; that is to say, was more an expression of the heart than of the intellect. Mahatmaji once remarked to me—"I am an artist. Just as a painter uses his brush and colour to express an idea, similarly I use my words." The events of the outside world produced their impression on his mind and moved him emotionally, and his words flowed as natural expressions of that emotion. He was, therefore, strong in the subjective quality of his writings, and cared more for emotional accuracy than logical perfection or elaboration. His mind is as subtle, sensitive and rhythmical as that of an artist. Another observation of his gave me some idea about his style and method of composition. He once remarked to me that, in his opinion, the nearer a man came to truth, the less words he would require to express his ideas.*

CHAPTER XIII.

PROGRESSING OR RETROGRESSING ?

Under Mahatmaji's instruction I began to study the reports received from various Congress Committees in North India, when my eyes were opened to the terrible proportions which government repression had assumed. In the pledge of volunteers adopted by the Ahmedabad Congress Mahatmaji had included a clause stipulating that the volunteers must be prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault and even death in the performance of their duty. Before the Ahmedabad Congress, Mahatmaji had heard only of two or three stray cases of assault committed by the police upon innocent volunteers. But what happened after the Ahmedabad Congress beggars description. At Sonapur in Behar the report was that the police under the order and supervision of the Superintendent of Police had looted the Congress office in broad daylight, and destroyed all papers by putting them to fire. At Amritsar, again, on one occasion, the volunteers and other members of the public had been so severely assaulted that many of them were left battered and wounded on the public road. In Benares several houses belonging to relatives of volunteers were plundered by the police on the strength of distress warrants issued against volunteers, and it was alleged that even women were forced to part with their ornaments. Similarly, the Magistrate of Bulandshahr had let loose the police upon the town and enacted such oppression as was unique even in those days of lawless repression. Arranging all these facts I shaped an article under the caption, "What Next?" and placed it before Mahatmaji. He was terribly agitated when he read the article, and suddenly burst out—"Next is Gunpowder," and immediately began to write his famous article of that name. Those outrageous tales of oppression went deep into his heart, and he began to feel that he must take some aggressive measure so as to draw upon his own

devoted head the whole weight of Governmental fury and anger. Thus, he wrote :—

"If it is true that under the cover of distress warrants the police have entered our homes in Benares and taken away ornaments even from the inmates, if it is true that in Bulandshahr, under the pretence of preserving order they have entered people's homes in order to assault them, if it is true that they have stripped prisoners almost naked in order to execute distress warrants, the case is complete for the fiercest civil disobedience of the most aggressive type, consistently with the preservation of non-violence on our side. We must not wait for gun-powder to be used upon helpless people, nor can we afford to put an undue strain upon the people's patience by merely remaining on the defensive and letting the Government agents pillage and plunder our homes. We must draw the gunpowder on our own heads and that too at the earliest possible opportunity. We, the principal workers, cannot afford to watch with philosophic calmness these exasperating criminal assaults upon inoffensive people although they are volunteers and have therefore undertaken to suffer."

Further,—“The Government want to goad us into violence or abject submission. We must do neither. We must retort by such civil disobedience as would compel shooting.”

He concluded the article with these words :—

“I had hoped that the pledge to face death was a distant event. Evidently God wills that we must be tested thoroughly and well. In His name was the battle begun. He must give us strength to go through it.” (“Young India,” January 12, 1922.)

Thus did Mahatmaji come to the conclusion that he should no longer stand merely on the defensive, but should at the earliest opportunity take the offensive, which would be aggressive civil disobedience. The repression of the Government did not demoralise the people ; on the contrary, it accelerated the process of awakening among the masses, and consolidated public opinion in favour of the Non-cooperators. Therefore, considered from the larger interest of the country, the lawless activities of the Government

were a source of gain rather than of loss to the people. Unable to accommodate in their gaols the ever-growing and almost illimitable number of volunteers who came forward to disobey the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act, the Government had to fall back upon devices involving misuse of power to check the swelling tide of the movement. Assaults and oppression by the police became the order of the day, and it appeared that the time was fast approaching when the country would be put to the extreme test of facing the bullet. The Benares and Sonapur incidents referred to above gave the reader some impression of the attempts made to harass people by open, day-light plunder of their belongings. Later on, four villages in the district of Champaran were, it was reported, ruthlessly pillaged in broad day light by a column of British Indian cavalry. This new form of oppression made it clear that the authority of the ruler which is consolidated by exercising power over the person and property of the ruled could not be successfully challenged unless an appreciable number of people renounced their attachment for both person and property, so long as the struggle continued. The problem became so acute at the time that Mahatmaji had to deal with it in a note in "Young India" entitled *Distress Warrants*. Wrote he,—

"Inquiries are being made in several places as to what should be done in cases where fines are imposed and distress warrants are issued for recovery. One finds a readiness to suffer imprisonment and assaults, but not loss of goods. We are so much tied down to our goods and other possessions that where no disgrace attaches to imprisonment, we prefer the inconvenience to loss of property. But we must perceive that we will lose a winning game, if we are not prepared to sacrifice our earthly possessions as well as bodily ease for the sake of it. This struggle, therefore, can give us victory, only if we become indifferent to everything through which the State can press us into subjection to its will. We must be prepared, therefore, to let our goods and our land be taken away from us and rejoice over the dispossession even as we rejoice today over imprisonments. We must rest assured that the Government will be more quickly tired of selling our chattel than

it is already of taking charge of our bodies"—*Young India*, January 12, 1922.

He concluded the note with a reference to the case of the Belgians during the late European war, and of the Boers during the South African War, who risked their all and yet had their possessions returned to them with honour upon the attainment of victory. Thus,—

"When Belgium was overrun by the Germans, the Belgians knew that they would return to their own lands as long as they retained the will to suffer for the restoration of their property. The late General Botha was a fugitive from his own rich possessions including hundreds of acres of land and finest cattle in South Africa. He did not count the cost, put up a fine fight and became virtually the uncrowned king of South Africa and had all his property returned to him with honour. We may do no less than the Boers and the Belgians, especially as ours is a struggle in which we are pledged to make all sacrifice, and exact none." (*Young India*, January 12, 1922.)

Generally speaking, therefore, the situation as it developed itself in the country was favourable to the prosecution of Mahatmaji's plan of Satyagraha. But nevertheless in order to correctly estimate the gain and loss achieved and sustained by the movement at the time, it is necessary to take into account some adverse incidents that disturbed the harmony of its growth along non-violent lines. These incidents showed that the message of non-violence had not permeated the masses to the extent to make them realise that any show of violence or retaliation on their part would destroy the prospect of civil or non-violent disobedience of Government laws, as contemplated by Mahatmaji. Thus, when on the arrest of one of the Punjab leaders, Aga Safdar Saheb, at Sealkot, the people insulted the Magistrate and tried to rush the gaol, it was clear that they violated their pledge of non-violence. A report was received during the Congress at Ahmedabad that at Ferozepur-Jhirka in the Punjab, the multitude similarly attacked the gaol, which resulted in several deaths on their side on account of the police being forced to open fire. The volunteers of Bengal, on the other hand, carried their disobedience to the point of breaking the discipline of gaol-life, contrary

to the ideal of a civil resister or Satyagrahi. Finally, the rowdyism created by the mob at Madras on the day of the Prince of Wales' reception (13th January, 1922), showed the degree and extent of our indiscipline as well as lack of control over the turbulent elements of society. Referring to this incident at Madras, Mahatmaji remarked as follows in *Young India* (January 19, 1922.)

"I hold the firing by the Cinema man to be justifiable inasmuch as his theatre would have been destroyed by the mob if he had not fired. The mob's increased fury was an exhibition of insolent rage against deserved punishment. The investment of Sir Thyagaraj Chettiar's home was a cowardly interference with personal liberty. The crowd that prevented the knight from doing honour to the Prince dishonoured itself and enhanced the value of the honour Sir Thyagaraj Chettiar was prevented from doing. Madras teaches us a lesson as Bombay has done. We have still much work to do before we can really establish a Swaraj atmosphere. Either we believe in a successful peaceful revolution, or we believe that non-violence is mere preparation for violence."

PART IV.

CHAPTER I.

BOMBAY ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE : HOPES OF MAHATMAJI.

I have referred in a previous chapter to the genesis of the Bombay (Malaviya) Conference of leaders of all parties. It had been arranged by Pandit Malaviya and Mr. Jinnah that three to four hundred representatives of different schools of political thought in India should assemble at this conference to deliberate on the terms on which a settlement might be effected with Government. The date of the meeting had already been fixed. The first sitting was to be held on the 14th January, 1922.

Mahatmaji reached Bombay on the morning of the 13th January. He immediately called me and said that he would not be able to look after "Young India" that week, and that I must devote my whole time to that work. I had thus to keep myself away most of the time when arguments and counter-arguments in respect of the various points to be taken at the conference were being discussed in Mahatmaji's room.

From the very beginning of the non-co-operation movement, Mahatmaji had concentrated his efforts on establishing unity between the Hindus and Mussalmans. And now he began to work for enlisting the sympathy of the Moderates to his cause. The Moderates, as the reader must be aware, were the only party in India at the time that had been lending their moral support to the Government. And it is clear that if Mahatmaji had succeeded in bringing them over to his side, the Government would have been thoroughly isolated, and its position in the country would have been further undermined. He imagined that although the Moderates had not seen their way to joining him in the struggle for redressing the wrongs of the Punjab, Khilafat and Swaraj, they would not be able to stand aside when the Government started the campaign of wholesale arrests and imprisonments of the Non-co-operators. He also expected that the Moderates would not tolerate the forcible suppres-

sion by the Government of the rights of free speech, free association and the freedom of the public Press. And he had a fear that if the Moderates were not brought into line with the rest of the country in that critical period of its history, they would be thoroughly discredited in the eyes of their countrymen. He, therefore, kept on searching for some means which would enable him to win over the Moderates, and make them stand shoulder to shoulder with the rest of their countrymen.

He found the means in a new formula to which he gave expression in an article entitled "The Immediate Issue" appearing in *Young India*, dated 5th January, 1922. It has been already described how the high-handed and arbitrary methods of the authorities to suppress public meetings, and peaceful volunteer organisations disturbed the contentment of the Moderates. In the article mentioned above Mahatmaji expressed the opinion that under the new circumstance created by the Government, the demands of Swaraj, the Khilafat and the Punjab must be for the time being relegated to the back-ground, because the maintenance of the rights of free speech and free association had become the primary issue. Thus he wrote:—

"Swaraj, the Khilafat, the Punjab occupy a subordinate place to the issue sprung upon the country by the Government. We must first make good the right of free speech and free association before we can make any further progress towards our goal.....When that position is attained, it is time for a representative conference to be summoned for the settlement of the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj, but not till then."

He further stated in that article that if the Government did not withdraw from this new attack upon the freedom of the people, it would be incumbent on them to start civil disobedience without delay; but under this new circumstance such disobedience would be initiated not primarily for the satisfaction of the original triple demands, but for the vindication of the rights of free speech and free association. Thus,—

"In the present case, therefore, aggressive civil disobedience should be confined to a vindication of the right of free speech and free association."

But the Moderates were fundamentally opposed to this very method of civil disobedience, or direct action. Mahatmaji, therefore, addressed a few words to them in that article to convince them of the constitutional and harmless nature of that method. He said,—

“I wish I could persuade everybody that civil disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. Civil disobedience is never followed by anarchy. Criminal disobedience can lead to it. Every state puts down criminal disobedience by force. It perishes if it does not. But to put down civil disobedience is to attempt to imprison conscience. Civil disobedience can only lead to strength and purity.” (“Young India”, January, 5, 1922).

All these extracts clearly show that Mahatmaji was anxious to obtain the sympathy and co-operation of the Moderates in the work of vindication of the rights of free speech and free association by a campaign of civil disobedience specially started for that purpose. Thereby, he thought he would gradually succeed in removing the prejudice of the Moderates against the method of civil disobedience, and in bringing them within the fold of non-co-operation.

CHAPTER II.

HOPES OF THE 'MODERATES.

But whatever might be Mahatmaji's motive or desire, Pandit Malaviyaji, on behalf of the Moderates, had been working for the recognition of an exactly opposite policy, *viz.*, that the very idea of civil disobedience might not take root in the country. I have already mentioned the rumour spread at Ahmedabad after the Congress that Panditji had been collecting signatures to a manifesto opposing the resolution of the Ahmedabad Congress advocating civil disobedience throughout the country. If the rumour had any basis Panditji must have latterly dropped the idea of the manifesto in favour of holding a conference of all parties at Bombay. From the letter of invitation issued by the conveners, of whom Pandit Malaviya was one, it will be apparent that the primary object of calling the conference was to side-track the movement of civil disobedience for which Mahatmaji was preparing the country, and thereby make the resolution of the Ahmedabad Congress inoperative. The following extracts from the letter of invitation will make the point clear to the reader :—

"The Ahmedabad Congress by rejecting the motion for independence and relaxing the mandatory character of the non-co-operation resolution, has gone some way towards conciliating the large section of the public which is opposed to forced marches in politics. This section has not recently been very articulate, but its influence on that account is not the less decisive. While the position of the Congress has been thus strengthened on the one side, the countenance given by it to the early adoption of aggressive civil disobedience cannot but cause anxiety. It, therefore, behoves us all, both the Government and the people, to strain every nerve to see that civil disobedience is not resorted to, until at least it is far more obvious than at present that the resources of reason and statesmanship have been exhausted."

This section of the Moderates would have been satisfied only with the suspension of the civil disobedience resolution of the Congress. But there was another section of them, whose influence, though not very much in evidence, was not quite insignificant. Sir Sankaran Nair, the first Speaker appointed by the Bombay Conference to regulate its proceedings, represented this group. According to this section of the Moderates, the whole programme of non-co-operation was so harmful, so very prejudicial to the best interests of the country, that it was necessary that it should be immediately abandoned, and Mahatmaji must be persuaded to approach the Government in a spirit of co-operation, and solicit the latter for a reasonable settlement. The resolutions adopted by the conference reflected the opinion and mentality of the first group of the Moderates. And Sir Sankaran was so much exasperated by the defeat of his plan that he began to contest the decisions arrived at even from his position of Speaker, and as a protest left the committee meeting of the conference on the second day of its proceedings (15th January, 1922). To understand the view-point of this group of Moderates one must read the long letter to the Press sent by Sir Sankaran, and published in the *Times of India* (Bombay), dated 17th January, 1922. In that letter Sir Sankaran brought into prominence his views that :—

(A) Mahatmaji's contention that the Government must show penitence for the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, was thoroughly unjustifiable, and, what was worse, insulting to the Government.

(B) Mahatmaji's remarks that the demands over the Punjab, Khilafat and Swaraj questions represented the "minimum demands" of the Congress did not leave any room for coming to a solution through discussion and negotiations.

(C) The demand that the Non-co-operators who had been imprisoned should be released as a preliminary condition to the conference, and before the settlement of the points at issue, was also thoroughly improper.

Finally, Sir Sankaran was never so much astonished and disgusted as when he heard Mahatmaji emphasising that the

Non-co-operators could not consent to any conference with the Government unless the Ali Brothers and other Futwa prisoners had been released.

From the tenour of the criticism made by Sir Sankaran in that public letter of the activities and attitude of the Non-co-operators, it appears that, according to him, it would have been more in the fitness of things, if, instead of making any demands and conditions, the Non-co-operators had confessed themselves as the guilty party and approached the Government with folded hands for peace and settlement.

CHAPTER III.

NON-CO-OPERATORS' SETTLE LINE OF ACTION.

It will be apparent from the above account how many conflicting attitudes and mentalities Mahatmaji had gone to wrestle with in Bombay. From the speech delivered by Lord Reading on 21st December, 1921, in reply to the deputation that waited upon him at Calcutta, and specially the words of high praise used by His Excellency with reference to Pandit Malaviyaji, created an erroneous impression on the public mind that Panditji had some commission from the Viceroy to negotiate with the Non-co-operators. The Non-co-operators, therefore, mustered strong in Bombay to see that the country's interests were properly safeguarded. They were confident that Mahatmaji would in no case budge from his position so far as the Punjab and Khilafat demands were concerned, and they came specially to make sure that he did not slacken in respect of the claim for Swaraj.

On the 13th and 14th January the leaders of the Non-co-operation Party assembled in Mahatmaji's residence to discuss and settle their line of action at the conference. Mr. Kelkar asked Mahatmaji in what capacity should the Non-co-operators join the conference, and what procedure should they follow. Mahatmaji said in reply that it would not be proper for them to be members of the conference, and thereby identify themselves with the resolutions adopted by it; but that they should assist the proceedings only as outsiders, or as invited guests. In other words, the Non-co-operators should not be a party to the prayer for peace which the conference would submit to the Government by a resolution. Mr. Kelkar said he had also thought on exactly the same lines, and then he suggested that it would not be proper for all the Non-co-operators to speak at the conference, but that the better course would be to appoint Mahatmaji as their sole spokesman. Mahatmaji admitted that the suggestion was reasonable; and it was

also approved by the rest of the party particularly on the ground that stray speeches by members might create unnecessary complications and difficulties. Pandit Malaviyaji sent a note to Mahatmaji asking for his consent to the appointment of Sir Sankaran Nair as the President of the conference. Mahatmaji wrote back to say that as the Non-co-operators were not going to attend the conference as members, the better course would be to appoint him as "Speaker." The conveners of the conference after some hesitation ultimately accepted this proposal.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST DAY'S PROCEEDINGS: NON-CO-OPERATORS DISCUSS RESULTS.

The conference commenced its proceedings at 3 P.M. of 14th January with a very long speech from Pandit Malaviya on behalf of the conveners of the conference. He recapitulated the whole history of British rule in India from the days of the East India Company up to the present day, tracing the origin of Indian unrest to its very source ! Then, the Speaker, Sir Sankaran Nair having taken his seat, one of the conveners, Mr. Jinnah, placed a few draft resolutions before the assembled representatives for consideration and discussion. He said the conveners had drafted those resolutions after a good deal of thought and deliberation ; their intention was to pave the way for a Round Table Conference, and they had assembled there to find out ways and means as to how the Government and the Non-co-operators would abandon their mutual hostility and join a Round Table Conference for settlement of the points at issue by mutual discussion and consultation. Mr. Jinnah brought out before the conference one special point. He said, the Viceroy, Lord Reading, must obtain authority from England to carry out the decision of the Round Table Conference, and should inform the representatives of the Indian people that such authority had been obtained. He said that without the Viceroy having power to give effect to the decisions of the conference, it was no use working for a Round Table Conference. This, in short, was the purport of Mr. Jinnah's speech.

The draft resolutions that Mr. Jinnah placed before the conference were composed almost on the lines of the telegrams that Pandit Malaviya had sent to Mahatmaji during the negotiations of December 1921. They did not contain the condition of the release of the Ali Brothers and other Futwa prisoners upon which Mahatmaji took such a firm stand, and over which the negotiations finally fell through in December.

At the very outset of his speech Mahatmaji said it would not be possible for the Non-co-operators to agree to join a Round Table Conference with the Government on the conditions set forth in the draft resolutions placed by Mr. Jinnah before them. Then he gave a detailed exposition of the point of view of the Non-co-operators on the question of peace with the Government. He said it was the Government that was on the war-path, and the Non-co-operators were purely standing on the defensive. He cited instances of excesses committed by the Government in pursuing their policy of repression when the bounds of law were violated, and the police and the military were let loose on innocent crowds assembled to demonstrate their grievances against the authorities. The Government, he said, should show some penitence and prove to the Non-co-operators that they had changed their heart. After Mahatmaji, many Moderate leaders delivered speeches when it was found that some of them had misunderstood the attitude of the Non-co-operators for joining the conference merely as invited guests, and not as members, and not committing themselves to its resolutions. Mahatmaji had to deliver a second speech to remove this misunderstanding. This was so very powerful that most of the Moderates were won over by him and the conference agreed to appoint a sub-committee to re-draft the resolutions placed by Mr. Jinnah. It was also decided that although not a member of the committee, Mahatmaji would be present at the committee meeting to help it in framing the resolutions.

The first day's proceedings of the conference having thus terminated, Mahatmaji returned to his residence followed by a large body of Non-co-operators, who were full of enthusiasm over the results of the day's deliberations. All of them were in raptures over Mahatmaji's last speech, which they said captured the Moderates by storm and brought about a thorough revolution in the procedure of the conference. They were also confident that the control established by Mahatmaji over the conference would enable him to re-shape the resolutions so as to satisfy the demands of the country.

The Non-co-operators then assembled in Mahatmaji's room, and continued their discussion till late at night (14th

January). They subjected Mahatmaji to a volley of questions so as to ascertain whether he was sufficiently strong over the question of Swaraj, and did not leave him till he promised that he would not be satisfied with anything less than Dominion Status for India.

This discussion continued, as I have said, till very late at night. The next morning, 15th January, when I entered Mahatmaji's room to see whether he had risen, I found him lying in bed in a particularly happy and joyous mood. He told me smiling—"Last night they gave me so much trouble over the question of Swaraj that I passed the whole night without closing my eyes. I have now got a full picture of Swaraj in my heart." Then, again, with a smile, he said—"But if I give out everything, the masses would certainly accept it with eagerness and delight, but possibly many of those who are following me now will run away from me."

CHAPTER V.

SECOND DAY'S PROCEEDINGS: NON-CO-OPERATORS SATISFIED.

15th January—Mahatmaji went out at 10 A.M. to attend the meeting of the resolutions sub-committee appointed yesterday to re-draft the resolutions to be placed before the conference, and spent the whole day there. Sir Sankaran Nair, the Speaker, who was conducting the sub-committee meeting created a scene there, and, disagreeing with Mahatmaji on certain points, left the chair in a huff. It was also reported that he had behaved insultingly towards Mahatmaji, and yet the latter without taking any offence smilingly and mildly replied to his caustic remarks only with the following words—"You may leave me, but I can't leave you." It appeared to me that this exhibition of temper by Sir Sankaran and Mahatmaji's patience, restraint and loftiness of spirit helped in drawing the general body of the Moderates closer to Mahatmaji.

Sir Sankaran's abrupt departure from the meeting created a sensation at the time, and the news of the incident was brought to us at our residence also. But Sir Visweswarayya was immediately appointed to fill up the vacant chair, and no other member of the conference having followed Sir Sankaran, the rest of the proceedings passed off without any other unfortunate incident.

On the termination of the proceedings of the conference, Mahatmaji returned to his residence late at night. The Non-co-operators were very happy and enthusiastic over the results of the conference. Mr. Jinnah turned up at 10 o'clock at night, and spent some time in friendly talks with Mahatmaji. While leaving, he said—"Well, I came only to congratulate you on your far-sighted statesmanship." This is mentioned only to show what a great impression was made by Mahatmaji upon those members of the conference, who were not his supporters.

As soon as Mr. Jinnah left, Mahatmaji started his **weekly** day of silence. The 16th of January, Monday, he spent mostly in writing work. Pandit Malaviya left Bombay on the 16th afternoon. He came to see Mahatmaji on his way to the station. He was, we were told, going to see the Viceroy at Delhi. Mahatmaji wrote at **once** a note mentioning the demands of the Non-co-operators for Panditji's guidance during negotiation with the Viceroy. I had to leave for Ahmedabad that very night (16th January) in connection with "Young India" work. Mahatmaji himself returned to the Ashram on 18th January after holding a meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress on the 17th in which resolutions over the Bombay (Malaviya) Conference were passed defining the attitude of the Congress towards the proposal of a settlement on the lines proposed by the Bombay Conference.

CHAPTER VI.

SWARAJ CONSTITUTION AT THE CONFERENCE : MINIMUM DEMANDS.

Mahatmaji dealt with the Congress demands, especially the question of Swaraj, in his speech delivered on the second day of the conference (15th January, 1922). The newspaper reports of the speech were very meagre and unsatisfactory, but we can form an idea of the trend of this speech, and also what he really meant by the term Swaraj, from his writings in *Young India* subsequent to this date, and his replies to public attacks made on him by some of the Moderates on the score of these demands.

A short report of Mahatmaji's utterance at the conference on the framing of the Swaraj Constitution was published by the Associated Press as follows :—

"The irreducible minimum has been before the country for a long time. There was no open mind about the Khilafat or the Punjab at the Round Table Conference. His emphatic submission would be for a scheme of Swaraj in accordance with the spirit of his demands for full status that would be evolved by duly elected representatives of the people. By "duly elected" representatives he meant those elected under the Congress Constitution, that is to say, under the four-anna franchise. These representatives will evolve their scheme for full Dominion Status." (A. P. Telegram from Bombay, 16th January, 1922).

Then, in the issue of "Young India" dated 19th January Mahatmaji reiterated the claims put forward by him at the Bombay Conference on behalf of the Congress in an article entitled "The Demands." Thus :—

"In order that all may approach the Round Table Conference with perfect knowledge of the Congress demands, I laid all our cards on the table and reiterated the claims regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj. Let me repeat them here."

After this introduction he first stated the Khilafat demand in the following terms:—

"So far as I can write from memory, full restoration to the Turks of Constantinople, Adrianople, Anatolia, including Smyrna and Thrace, complete withdrawal of non-Muslim influence from Arabia, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and therefore Syria, and withdrawal of British troops, whether English or Indian, from those territories."

After mentioning the Khilafat demand as given above, Mahatmaji put forward the Punjab demands in the following terms:—

"Full enforcement of the Report of the Congress Subcommittee, and therefore stopping of pensions of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, General Dyer, and other officers named in the Report for dismissal."

Then, he stated the Swaraj demand as follows:—

"Swaraj means, in the event of the foregoing demands being granted, full Dominion Status. The scheme of such Swaraj should be framed by representatives duly elected in terms of the Congress Constitution. That means four anna franchise. Every Indian adult, male or female, paying four annas and signing the Congress creed will be entitled to be placed on the Congress roll. These electors would elect delegates who would frame the Swaraj Constitution. This should be given effect to, without any change, by the British Parliament."

In the same article, Mahatmaji also stated his opinion about the place of experts in a conference of popular representatives for framing the Swaraj Constitution, which deserves to be mentioned in this connection. He said:—

"The scheme of Swaraj is that scheme which popular representatives frame. What happens, then, to the experts in administration and others who may not be popularly elected? In my opinion, they also should attend and have the vote given, but they must necessarily be in a minority. They must expect to influence the majority by a constant appeal to the logic of facts."

There is one special point which deserves to be mentioned in this connection. In his public letter to the

Times of India dated 17th January, Sir Sankaran Nair brought a false charge against Mahatmaji that the latter insisted upon the withdrawal of the British from Egypt as a condition precedent to a Round Table Conference. The Secretaries to the Bombay Conference publicly repudiated this statement of Sir Sankaran in a rejoinder to the Press published on the 18th, in which they said—

“Mr. Gandhi only said that when Swaraj was obtained, India will not permit a single Indian soldier to leave the country in order to enable England to maintain her supremacy in Egypt against the wishes of the Egyptians.”

Mahatmaji himself in an interview granted on 17th January to a special representative of the “Swarajya” of Madras declared that the charge brought forward by Sir Sankaran was absolutely groundless.*

* Mahatmaji's statement on the point to the representative of the “Swarajya” was as follows :—

“Sir Sankaran hardly does justice to himself or to me when he reports me as having said that I wanted the evacuation of Egypt as a term of peace. In answer to an ejaculation about Egypt, I remarked that although the Khilafat demand did not and could not include the evacuation of Egypt, when India had full Swaraj she would certainly not permit a single Indian soldier to leave India in order to coerce the brave Egyptians into submission to a foreign yoke.”

CHAPTER VII.

NON-COMMITTAL ATTITUDE OF THE CONFERENCE.

The Punjab and the Khilafat demands had been before the public in definite and precise forms for a sufficiently long time, but it was not clear to many of the politicians what was actually meant by the Congress demand for Swaraj. Formerly, when the Congress was dominated by the Moderate politicians, whose training, outlook and way of thought were different from those of the Non-co-operators, it was believed that Swaraj must come as a gift from England, and that India must remain satisfied with whatever constitution was granted to her by England. Indeed, they thought that India would be entitled to present her view-point before the British Parliament, but inasmuch as she had no power of her own, there was, according to them, ultimately no other alternative but to depend upon the good grace and fairness of England, for the satisfaction of India's political ambition. And, therefore, when Mahatmaji, the high-priest of Non-co-operation, delineated on the second day of the conference his plan of framing the Swaraj Constitution, the Moderates were not a little surprised and astounded. It appeared to them most surprising, and almost beyond the power of their imagination, to grasp that the people of India should assert their equality with the British, and present their own scheme of Swaraj before the rulers in India and England, and demand acceptance thereof without any alteration. It was hence that we find the conference adopting a non-committal attitude on the question of these demands. Resolution No. 5 of the conference begins with the following preliminary remark: "Without at present going into the particulars of the demands of the country with reference to the Punjab, the Khilafat and Swaraj questions, this conference hereby appoints a committee," etc.

Besides, they had till then held undisputed sway over the domain of Indian politics, and they felt that if Mahatmaji's suggestion about the election of representatives

upon the basis of the four-anna franchise were given effect to, their political ascendancy would be undermined for ever, and the Non-co-operators would be the masters of the situation. Of course, there was nothing to prevent them from becoming Congress members themselves by paying the four-anna subscription. But the way they had ignored the call of the country and had joined the Government in their hostility towards the Non-co-operators had made them extremely unpopular with the people, and they knew they had no chance of succeeding in an open election. Therefore, Mahatmaji's proposal that the Swaraj Constitution would be framed by elected representatives of the people in terms of the four-anna franchise of the Congress, did not commend itself to many of the Moderates, who, though not bold enough to start an open campaign against it, conducted a good deal of subterranean agitation to prevent what they considered to be an onslaught upon their political position.

A statement published in the Press by Mr. Jinnah, one of the Secretaries of the Bombay Conference, gives some inkling into this undercurrent of agitation among the Moderates. This is what Mr. Jinnah wrote to pacify the oppositionists in the Moderate camp.

"The (Bombay) Conference, after Mr. Gandhi had made a speech giving particulars of his demands and after full consideration of the question whether it should specify the country's demands decided by resolution No. 5 as follows:—'Without at present going into the particulars of the demands of the country with reference to the Punjab, the Khilafat and Swaraj questions, the conference hereby appoints a committee' etc. Now, I ask, is it of any use or wise to attach undue importance to what a particular individual, however great he may be, stated during the committee discussions, or in his speech before the conference? The conference is only responsible for its resolutions."

From all this it is clear that the hopes of Mahatmaji and of the Non-co-operators with regard to their object in joining the Bombay Conference were not fulfilled. They did not succeed in obtaining the recognition by the conference of the Congress demands, or of the Swaraj Constitution.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARGES LAID AGAINST MAHATMAJI.

While placing the Congress demands before the Bombay Conference, Mahatmaji emphasised that there was no open mind in regard to them and that the Congress and the Khilafat representatives would be bound to press for their acceptance by the Round Table Conference; and a good deal of blame was laid at Mahatmaji's door for making that statement. The charge against Mahatmaji was mainly as follows:—

“If the Congress programme is so cut and dried, where is the necessity for a Round Table Conference?” Was it reasonable on Mahatmaji's part to place those demands before the Bombay Conference as the “minimum demands” of the Congress, and therefore unalterable? Not only that, he repeated through a resolution of the Congress Working Committee, dated 17th January, that in case the Round Table Conference was summoned, the Congress and Khilafat representatives would be bound to press for the full satisfaction of their claims. It is true that the Bombay Conference did not identify itself with those demands;—it kept the door for discussion open; but Mahatmaji was sternly unbending when he repeated that his demands were “irreducible.” These were the points of criticism that were levelled against Mahatmaji. Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru, a prominent Moderate leader, who was elected by the conference as a member of its committee tendered his resignation on this very ground. In his letter of resignation, which was published in the Press, he wrote as follows:—

“Mr. Gandhi has stated his minimum demands and a Round Table Conference is not to consider but to concede them, so that compromise is declared to be impossible, and any discussion is fruitless.”

Similarly, Sir Sankaran Nair in his letter to the “Times of India” dated 17th January, gave expression to his

disgust and chagrin at Mahatmaji's placing the Congress demands before the conference. In his opinion, it was only with the idea of frustrating the attempt of the Moderates to bring the Government and the Non-co-operators together that Gandhiji was repeatedly emphasising that his demands were irreducible and unalterable.

Lastly, one observes that even the Government communique (7th February, 1922) issued in reply to Mahatmaji's ultimatum from Bardoli, dated 4th February, 1922 refers to the matter as follows:—

“Further, Mr. Gandhi also made it apparent that the proposed Round Table Conference would be called merely to register his decrees.”

This controversy was, again, taken up by some of the newspapers in England, and the “Manchester Guardian” wrote in an editorial on 21st January that Gandhiji's emphasis on “irreducible demands” made it impossible to summon the Round Table Conference. It wrote as follows:—

“Mr. Gandhi wrecks all immediate hope of an agreement in the announcement of the minimum demands he would make at a Round Table Conference,” etc.

CHAPTER IX.

MAHATMAJI DEFENDS HIMSELF.

It is, therefore, necessary to analyse Mahatmaji's point of view and to try to understand why he took such a firm stand in the matter. Was it impossible for him to realise that he might be convinced about the reasonableness of adopting some change in those demands as the result of a free discussion in the conference? Why should he, therefore, emphatically put forward his demands as representing the irreducible minimum? The answer from Mahatmaji's side is that when two contending parties appear at a conference for the settlement of their differences, it becomes easier to understand their mutual contentions if the claims and demands of each party are presented in categorical and well-defined forms. Thus, it is a help, and not a hindrance, to put forward the demands of each party, and generally speaking that is the procedure adopted at all conferences for the solution of claims between two contending parties.

In his article on "The Demands" appearing in *Young India*, to which we have already adverted, Mahatmaji has given a convincing reply to the critics who doubted the wisdom of such a declaration from him at that stage of the negotiations. Thus, he says,—

"If the Congress programme is so cut and dried, where is the necessity for a conference?—asks the critic. I hold that there is, and there will always be. The Government may have a reasonable and a convincing answer on the claims. The conference have fixed their minimum, but the fixing of the minimum means no more than confidence in the justice of one's cause. It further means that there is no room for bargaining. There can, therefore, be no appeal to one's weakness or incapacity. The appeal can only be addressed to reason. If the Viceroy summons the conference, it means either that he recognises the justice of the claims, or hopes to satisfy the Congressmen among others of the injustice thereof. He must be confident of the

justice of his proposals for a rejection or reduction of the claims. That is my meaning of a meeting of equals, who eliminate the idea of force and instantly shift their ground as they appreciate the injustice of their position. I assure His Excellency the Viceroy that the Congressmen or Non-co-operators have every incentive to be reasonable, for theirs is the duty of suffering as a result of rejection of any just offer."

And, again, in his rejoinder (7th February, 1922) to the Government communique published in reply to his ultimatum from Bardoli, Mahatmaji meets the charge against him in the following terms :—

"The Government communique does me a cruel wrong by imputing to me a desire that the proposed Round Table Conference should be called merely to register my decrees.... I did state in order to avoid any misunderstanding, the Congress demands, as I felt I was in duty bound, in as clear terms as possible. No Congressman could approach any conference without making his position clear." And, then, he continues,—“It is open to anybody to convince me that the demands of the Congress regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj are wrong or unreasonable, and I would certainly retrace my steps. The Government of India know that such has been always my attitude.”

Lastly, there is a note on record which Pandit Malaviya had obtained from Mahatmaji stating his reasons for putting forward the demands of the Congress in the form in which he had presented them at the conference. Malaviyaji wanted to place it before the Viceroy, Lord Reading, along with the resolutions passed at the Bombay All-Parties Conference praying among other things for the convening of a Round Table Conference. Whether that note had been placed before the Viceroy is not known; but on January 18th, it was read before the Legislative Assembly by Mr. Seshagiri Aiyar, formerly a Judge of the Madras High Court, in the course of his speech on a resolution recommending the withdrawal of the repressive policy of the Government. The note reads as follows :—

“What I mean is that until I am convinced that my demands are unreasonable, unjust or impossible of fulfil-

ment, I would not recede from them. I would not consider the unwillingness of Government or the Parliament to grant any of these things to be a ground for reducing these demands.

"The value of a Round Table Conference consists in understanding each other's difficulties and of making allowances of them. Hence my insisting that Government must change their heart. If they entrench themselves behind their armed forces, the conference must be not only fruitless but mischievous.

"They must try to appeal to our intellect, just as we must appeal to theirs. If the Government or anybody, therefore, shows that any particular demand is unreasonable, I would certainly give in, as I did yesterday on the question of the motion of securing the release of political prisoners other than the two classes mentioned in Resolution III."

CHAPTER X.

GOVERNMENT LIABLE TO THE SAME CHARGES.

It would be pertinent to observe that although these critics were so loud in their condemnation of Mahatmaji for having formulated his minimum demands, they were discreetly silent over the similar action of the Government, who were no less emphatic than Mahatmaji in demanding that some preliminary conditions must be fulfilled before they could agree to summon a Round Table Conference. In his reply to the Malaviya Deputation on 21st December, Lord Reading put forward those demands of the Government against the Non-co-operators; and they were His Excellency's "minimum" demands, that is to say, demands from which he refused to recede even by a hair's breadth. The Viceroy was astounded at the impudence of the Non-co-operators in emphasising the "minimum" demands of the Congress, but he forgot that he also was pressing for some unalterable "minimum" demands from the Government side, when he laid down as his minimum demands the suspension of essential non-co-operation activities, and the lifting of the ban on the Prince's visit, as pre-condition of a Round Table Conference at which Non-co-operators should obtain a hearing.

Then, again, in reply to the representation of the Secretaries of the Bombay Conference, the Viceroy informed them through a letter written by his Private Secretary, dated 26th January, that the resolutions of the Bombay Conference did not satisfy his conditions as set forth in his reply to the Malaviya Deputation of 21st December 1921. Here also the reader will observe that the Viceroy turned down the resolutions of the Bombay Conference by insisting on a few demands, which were his "minimum" demands. If His Excellency could see his way to summon the proposed Round Table Conference without any condition or demand from the Government side, then his objection to Mahatmaji's repeated emphasis on the triple demand would have appeared

more rational and sensible. But instead one finds that from the beginning of these negotiations the Government insisted on some conditions, and refused to join the Non-co-operators in a conference unless those conditions were satisfied. With what face, then, could the Government blame the other party for putting forward their claims, and declaring them to be unalterable? One can presume that if the Government did not place their entire reliance upon the brute-force which they commanded for maintaining their authority over the people, their line of action would have been different. They would have then unhesitatingly declared that since the discontent among the people had increased on an unprecedented scale, they were willing unconditionally to meet the representatives of the people, and to summon a Round Table Conference to discuss and settle the various points of difference. In that case, the popular representatives would have gladly accepted their invitation and joined the conference without any condition, and without raising the question of demands from their side, and if they failed to do so, the Government could reasonably put the blame for the break-down of the negotiation upon their shoulders.

Therefore, it is clear, firstly, that for a settlement between two contending parties it was better that their mutual claims and demands were definitely and clearly put forward, so as to help in the discussion and understanding of mutual positions. Secondly, it was neither reasonable nor fair for the Government to blame Mahatmaji for declaring the Congress demands as unalterable, or to reject on that account the resolution of the Bombay Conference recommending a Round Table Conference, when they themselves were inexorable that their own conditions must be totally accepted by the other party before a Round Table Conference could be thought of.

CHAPTER XI.

A GOVERNMENT ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE WOULD REGISTER GOVERNMENT DECREES.

Mahatmaji clearly perceived from this attitude of the Viceroy that the latter would not condescend to meet the representatives of the people on a footing of equality. The Government's pride of power and authority blurred their vision, and misled them into rejecting all proposals of peace, unless the people agreed to accept and abide by the preliminary conditions they thought fit to impose. That pride also prompted them to treat the demands of the people with scorn and contempt. The Government feared that if they conceded equality of status to the representatives of the people the whole edifice of their authority buttressed up by naked force would tumble down like a house of cards. It was because Mahatmaji realised this mentality of the Government, and that of Lord Reading in particular, that in his ultimatum to the Viceroy, dated 1st February, 1922, he stated that he was never enamoured of the proposal of a Round Table Conference. He said that it was for that reason that he had not himself approached the Government with that proposal. He believed that in the 'present mood' of the Government, it was not possible for them to concede an equality of status to the representatives of the people. And, further, he felt that the Indians were disorganised, and therefore weak, and were not in a position to assert and establish their equality with the Government. Mahatmaji's exact language was as follows:—

"In the present mood of the Government of India and the present unprepared state of the country in respect of complete control of the forces of violence, Non-co-operators were unwilling to have anything to do with the Malaviya Conference, whose object was to induce your Excellency to convene a Round Table Conference."

Mahatmaji's point of view was perfectly clear in this statement. In fact, he knew that a conference convened

under the existing conditions would do nothing but register the decrees of the Government because of the inability of the popular representatives to call up sufficient strength behind them from the country. Mahatmaji had very often repeated the statement that unless the Government was "penitent" it was futile to make proposals of peace, or to call a Round Table Conference. The meaning of this was that unless the Government abandoned their pride of power, and restrained themselves from pursuing their unrighteous course, their present "mood" would make it impossible for them to meet the representatives of the people on a footing of equality, or to any useful purpose.

Similarly, the above statement shows that in Mahatmaji's opinion it was not advisable for the Non-co-operators to take any initiative in the matter of the Round Table Conference until they had gathered sufficient strength to assert their equality of status with the Government, and thus to make themselves heard. It was from this point of view that Mahatmaji, writing to the Secretaries of the Bombay Conference in his letter dated 31st January intimating that he had decided to post his ultimatum to the Viceroy on the next day, 1st February (1922), said—

"The Viceroy need not call a Round Table Conference. The more I think of it, the more clear it is to me that he cannot call the conference, but he can easily adopt my suggestion if he wishes to."

The reader may remember that during the negotiations of December 1921 Mahatmaji was prepared to join any conference summoned by the Government without any condition from his side, if the Government did not impose conditions upon him and the Non-co-operators, and he repeated the offer at the Bombay Conference, but the Viceroy gave a deaf ear to this suggestion. If the intention of the Government was to pay sympathetic consideration to the grievances of the people, the Viceroy could have easily consented to that proposal. The fact of the matter was that Lord Reading was not prepared for a settlement with the people on that basis. He wanted, firstly, that the Non-co-operators should approach him as suitors on bended knees, and, secondly, that they should suspend their activity in

connection with the movement of non-co-operation. Now, is it a wonder that knowing this position, as he did, Mahatmaji should inform the Government and their supporters, the Moderates, through his speeches at the Bombay Conference, and two days later by a resolution of the Congress Working Committee, that in the event of a Round Table Conference taking place, the Congress and the Khilafat representatives would be bound to press for the full satisfaction of the triple demand of the Congress ?

CHAPTER XII.

" FUTWA PRISONERS " AT THE BOMBAY CONFERENCE.

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Pandit Malaviya's effort to bring about a Round Table Conference in the month of December (1921) failed because the Government was not prepared to accept the conditions set forth by Mahatmaji as the price for the withdrawal of the hartal in Calcutta. The conditions put forward by Mahatmaji in December were all accepted in toto by the Bombay Conference, and formed part of the proposals that were submitted to the Government on behalf of the conference. Only on one particular, but not very vital, point did Mahatmaji yield his ground a little out of consideration for the feelings of his Moderate friends. Mahatmaji's original term about the unconditional release of the Futwa prisoners was agreed to by the Bombay Conference,* and was again emphasised by a resolution of the Congress Working Committee.†

It is worth while to mention with what difficulty and struggle Mahatmaji maintained this condition of the release of the Futwa prisoners as condition precedent to the proposed Round Table Conference. The reader will remember that during the negotiations in December Pandit Malaviyaji had tried his utmost to remove that condition from the terms insisted on by Mahatmaji. And when the Bombay Conference met, it was found that that condition was carefully omitted from the draft resolutions prepared by the conveners and placed before the conference for its consideration. The draft advocated only the release of prisoners convicted under the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act about which Pandit Malaviya had no difference of opinion with the Non-co-operators. Mahatmaji, therefore, had to

* Vide Resolution No. III of the Conference.

† This formed part of Resolution No. IV of the Working Committee. Thus, we read—"All Futwa prisoners including the Ali Brothers and their companions be released."

raise his voice of protest at the very commencement of the proceedings. When called upon to express his opinion, he said that the release of prisoners mentioned in the draft was not sufficient to create an atmosphere of peace desired by the Government and the conveners of the conference. It was, according to him, unthinkable to hold a Round Table Conference without the release of the Ali Brothers, and other Futwa prisoners. Then, he mentioned the cases of many other prisoners, who had been convicted for technical breaches of the law, although actually engaged in non-violent activities, and said that unless these also were released it would not be possible to pacify the country. In his opinion if the Government agreed to release all these different classes of prisoners, it would be a clear indication that they were in earnest about establishing peace in the country, and this would give confidence to the Non-co-operators that their grievances and demands would be properly considered at the proposed conference. Mahatmaji's insistence on the release of these prisoners caused a flutter in the Moderate camp, but after five hours of deliberation the conference agreed to appoint a Resolutions Sub-committee to re-draft all the resolutions. This Sub-committee reinstated the condition of the release of the Futwa prisoners as a condition precedent to the Round Table Conference. It may be mentioned here that, among other things, it was Mahatmaji's unyielding attitude in regard to the release of the Futwa prisoners that exasperated Sir Sanjivan Nair, who ultimately left the chair in a fit of temper. This condition about the Futwa prisoners was made part of resolution No. III adopted by the conference, and reads as follows:—

“All notifications issued and orders passed by the Government under Act XIV of 1908, Part II and the Seditious Meetings Act should be withdrawn, and all prisoners convicted or under arrest or prosecution under the aforesaid notifications or orders should be released, as also the Futwa prisoners.”

CHAPTER XIII.

PRISONERS GUILTY OF TECHNICAL BREACHES OF LAW AT THE CONFERENCE.

Beside the Futwa prisoners, the condition of the release of a third class of prisoners was also incorporated at the end of the third resolution passed by the Bombay Conference. It has been stated that the Government had imprisoned many Non-co-operators for technical breaches of law, although they had been engaged in non-violent activities, who did not fall under the group of prisoners convicted either for the Futwas, or under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Mahatmaji insisted that this last group of prisoners also should be released before summoning the Round Table Conference, and the suggestion was accepted by the Bombay Conference. Only it made the method of working this condition somewhat milder than what was originally proposed by Mahatmaji.

The reader may remember that this last condition was suggested by Mahatmaji during the negotiations of December in his telegram to Mr. Chackraverty (Telegram No. VIII) where he said that the Government might put down violence, veiled, open or intended, but they must discharge those who had been unwarrantably imprisoned in spite of their being engaged in non-violent activities. It is not necessary to reproduce that telegram here, but the reader may look up the chapters of Part II of this book where the subject has been dealt with in detail. The point was again pointedly brought out by Mahatmaji in his "ultimatum" to the Viceroy, dated 1st February, 1922. There he urged upon Lord Reading to make a public declaration that he would abandon his hostility to all activities of a non-violent character that were going on throughout the country. Thus:—"I would respectfully urge you as the Head of the Government of India finally to revise your policy and set free all non-co-operating prisoners who are convicted or under trial for non-violent

activities and to declare in clear terms a policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country, whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab, wrongs or Swaraj, or any other purpose, and even though they fall under the repressive sections of the Penal Code⁶ or Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws, subject always to the condition of non-violence."

This last phrase—"subject always to the condition of non-violence"—was Mahatmaji's main and central point, and the justice of the demand cannot be denied by any impartial student of contemporary political events in India. But the Government of Lord Reading had thrown all considerations of justice to the winds and had imprisoned many persons of the non-co-operation faith by illegal use of laws, thus inaugurating a reign of lawless repression throughout the country. The main charge of the Non-co-operators against the Government was that a system that could be responsible for so much corrupt practice in furtherance of its own self interest, could never mean well by the children of the soil. And they were also conscious that a Government that depended on nothing but brute-force for the maintenance of its domination over the people could never come down from its high pedestal to rub shoulders with the representatives of the people round a conference table and straightway grant their demands in accordance with the canons of justice and equity. They, therefore, suspected that all their desire for peace, or the cry for creating a peaceful atmosphere in the country might be mere camouflage. Mahatmaji, therefore, pointedly declared in his speech at the conference that, "He wanted a change of heart of Government and some penitence for the grievous wrong done to the country. He wanted in particular the release of all prisoners convicted under not only the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the Seditious Meetings Act, but of all such men as had done nothing in the nature of moral turpitude under the Penal Code."

CHAPTER XIV.

APPOINTMENT OF MIXED COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED BY CONFERENCE.

On the second day of the conference, Mahatmaji put forward a proposal that a committee appointed by the conference should go into the cases of all non-co-operating prisoners convicted under the ordinary law, and recommend to the Government the release of those who would be found by the committee to be undergoing imprisonment in spite of their activities being of a pronouncedly non-violent character. His proposal was as follows:—"With reference to political prisoners convicted or under prosecution under the ordinary law, it would be the Conference Committee which would decide whether all such prisoners could be covered by recommendations of this conference."

The conference, however, did not accept this proposal of Mahatmaji in toto. Its decision on the point was indicated by the latter portion of resolution No. III, which read as follows:—"that inasmuch as persons have been convicted for non-violent activities of an innocent character under cover of ordinary laws, a committee should be appointed by the Government consisting of two persons, one to be nominated by the Government, and the other by the committee of the conference appointed by resolution No. 5, with power to appoint an Umpire to investigate the cases of the persons herein before referred to, and that such of them as might be recommended by the said committee or Umpire be released."

Thus, Mahatmaji's original proposal that a committee appointed by the Bombay Conference should go into these cases was substituted by the proposal of a mixed committee in which the Government also was to be represented. The reader must remember that prisoners committed under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Seditious Meetings Act, or the Futwa prisoners did not come under this clause, inasmuch as the conference had adopted their unconditional

release as a preliminary condition to the Round Table Conference. The present mixed committee, therefore, was to be appointed to investigate those cases alone that did not fall under any of the above groups, and in whose conviction the ordinary law of the land had been applied. Mahatmaji agreed to this compromise partly under pressure from his Moderate friends, and partly under the belief that under the circumstances, such would be the more reasonable attitude to adopt. And he also believed that the compromise would not in any way jeopardise the interest of the prisoners concerned. While accepting this compromise he expressed himself as follows at the conference:—"As regards the persons imprisoned in virtue of normal laws having been misused or misapplied this small committee will consider their cases and recommend their discharge. He felt that in the hands of the committee the interest of his imprisoned countrymen would be quite safe." And, then, again, in the issue of *Young India* dated 19th January (1922), he dealt with this compromise as follows:—

"The Committee saw the force of the suggestion that the prisoners for non-violent or otherwise innocent activities under cover of the ordinary laws should be discharged upon the proof of their non-violence. For this purpose I had suggested the committee appointed by the conference. But on the Resolutions Committee showing that it would be difficult for the Government to accept such an uncontrolled recommendation, I agreed to the principle of arbitration now imported in the resolution."

Mahatmaji's acceptance of the idea of a mixed committee of arbitration as incorporated in the latter part of Resolution No. III created an impression among some Non-co-operators that he had yielded his ground at the conference, and there were some whispers of discontent among them. Immediately after the conference a representative of the *Bombay Chronicle* drew Mahatmaji's attention to this view of the compromise taken by some of his followers, but Mahatmaji disagreed with that criticism and said in reply to his interviewer that:—"He has succeeded in establishing an important principle—the principle of arbitration which the Government had hitherto not recognised. In deference to the strongly expressed wishes of his Moderate friends he had

agreed that in certain classes of prisoners Government should be given an opportunity of looking into and reviewing their records. And it was here that the principle he had mentioned above would have to be put into operation. The Government would appoint a nominee of its own, and the (Bombay) Conference another, and there would be an Umpire above them who would decide in cases of difference of opinion between them. Beyond this, there was absolutely no change of position, and if the Government accepted the suggestion of the conference an important point would be gained."

CHAPTER XV.

MAHATMAJI'S CONDITIONS: THEIR REAL SIGNIFICANCE.

Thus we find that Mahatmaji pressed at the Bombay Conference the same conditions on which he had been insisting since the beginning of the negotiations started by Pandit Malaviyaji, and it would be no exaggeration to say that he succeeded considerably in bringing round the conference to his own point of view. It was not with the intention, as some have imagined, of frustrating the attempts of the Moderates that he laid so much emphasis on the satisfaction and fulfilment of these demands. His main intention was to test the bona fides of the Government and to prevent the well-meaning Moderate politicians from being duped by the empty though honeyed words of the Viceroy, and falling an easy or willing prey to his well-laid diplomatic trap. It was not Mahatmaji's intention to humiliate the Government either; but his whole effort was directed towards breaking through the meshes of Lord Reading's diplomacy, so that the leaders of the people, whether through weakness or miscalculation, might not turn the country away from the true line of progress. Just as the interest of the Government demanded that the movement of non-co-operation should be destroyed by any means in order to maintain their position and authority in the country, similarly the interest of India at the time demanded that the basis of that authority resting on brute-force should be undermined and replaced by a well-organised public opinion expressing itself through the Indian National Congress. No lover of India could, therefore, tolerate that activities in progress which were destined to develop the strength of the country should be abandoned at that juncture in pursuance of what might after all be a mirage of a settlement with the Government. If it could be definitely proved, as it unfortunately could not, that the Government was sincere in its professions of peace, or of arriving at a just settlement with the representatives of the people, then alone, according to Mahatmaji, could some of the more

prominent items of non-co-operation be suspended till the termination of the Round Table Conference. Those conditions were, therefore, brought forward by Mahatmaji to test how far the Government was honest and sincere in their professions. According to him, the satisfaction of those terms alone could make the oppressed and humiliated Indians believe that the Government had undergone a change of heart in that they were penitent for the excesses of tyranny and oppression committed by them. This, again, was asked for not to humiliate the Government, but to put them right with the children of the soil by removing the spirit of opposition or hostility that had been created in the minds of the latter by the Government's lawless repressive activities. That was the goal for which Mahatmaji had been working, and he made it perfectly clear in an interview he granted to a special representative of the "Swarajya" of Madras. He said—"It is undoubtedly true that I want the Government to be penitent, not in order to humiliate it, but in order to set it right with the people, and certainly there would be no peace in the land and no settlement until the Government acknowledges its mistakes and retraces its steps. The Bombay Conference resolutions are calculated to enable it to do so gracefully."

PART V.

CHAPTER I.

MAHATMAJI'S SEARCHINGS OF HEART.

Pandit Malaviya's efforts to bring about a Round Table Conference having failed, it was decided, as previously arranged, to start the campaign of mass civil disobedience from Bardoli. From 18th to 28th January (1922) Mahatmaji stayed at the Ashram in expectation of a final message from Pandit Malaviyaji. At this time the Non-co-operators were everywhere found to be in exultant mood, because of the failure of the Government to stem the tide of their movement, which instead of abating under Government repression derived added strength and intensity from the same, and the enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. But Mahatmaji appeared to be very thoughtful. No trace of a little justifiable pride was observable in his countenance, even though that moment appeared to be one of triumph for the Non-co-operators. On the contrary, he seemed to have been meekly analysing the situation, and watching the development of events with humility and caution. Instead of being sorry for Pandit Malaviyaji's failure, he was gratified that the Round Table Conference had not been summoned by the Government. He had agreed, no doubt, under pressure and persuasion of friends like Malaviyaji and Mr. Jinnah, to the proposal of the conference, but not without misgivings, for in his inmost heart he could not help regarding it with a good deal of fear and suspicion. He felt that the country had not gathered strength enough to enable the representatives of the people to assert an equality of status with the Government. And he held that so long as the present unnatural relation with the Government existed, and the people were looked down upon as objects of oppression and exploitation, there could not possibly be any conference with the Government worth the name. The prime necessity therefore, according to him, was to purify this unnatural relation of superiority affected by the authorities resulting in race-domination and forcible

suppression of the natural rights of the Indian people; and it was Mahatmaji's conviction that unless the people had given tangible proofs of their capacity to go through an ordeal of suffering, such as must necessarily follow upon the inauguration of a campaign of civil disobedience, and thereby shown themselves fit to carry on effectively the sternest fight for the removal of their just grievances, and also for the preservation of their manhood and their freedom, it was not possible to modify the present impure relation and establish in its stead a relation of equality and amity with the ruling authorities. He, therefore, believed that the attempt to bring about a Round Table Conference for the settlement of the questions at issue was premature, and bound to be abortive.

Apart from the question of establishing a proper relation with the ruling power, there was the question whether the country had developed sufficient character-power to overcome the national weaknesses, the absence of a genuine solidarity and want of working experience, in order to be able to carry on the administration. The comparative indifference of the educated classes towards the programme of Charka and Khaddar was a clear indication to Mahatmaji that he had failed to remove their partiality for merely an external and intellectual type of agitation, as distinguished from solid work for the regeneration of the country. Then, there was the problem of Hindu-Moslem unity, which though temporarily seeming to have solved itself might after all prove to be a delusion. He found that the majority of his followers had till then subscribed to the policy of non-violence merely as a weapon of the weak, and had not therefore realised the true meaning and significance of Satyagraha. About untouchability, the response given by the majority of the orthodox classes of Hindus was far from satisfactory. How long could Swaraj last in India till these weaknesses of national character had been removed,—was the problem that began to agitate him. He knew that by means of mass civil disobedience in Bardoli, he had the power to shake even to its foundation the entire system of British administration in India, but unless the country was ready to shoulder the responsibility of ordered and peaceful Government,

would it be of any avail, so far as the true interests of the country was concerned, to start such a campaign? He, therefore, came to the conclusion that the best course under the circumstance would be to engage the country in constructive work for a further period of time, so that the people might be more disciplined and organised, and the strength of the country thereby increased. All these thoughts of Mahatmaji found expression in an article from his pen in his Gujarati-weekly *Navajivan*, an English translation of which appeared in the "Independent" of Allahabad about this time. A portion of that translation is given below :—

"I am positively shaking with fear. If a settlement were to be made, then where are we to go? Although I will miss no opportunity of settlement, still after having come to know the strength of India I am afraid of the settlement. What will be our condition if settlement is made before we have been thoroughly tested? It would be like that of a child prematurely born which will perish in a short time. In Portugal, the Government was changed in a moment as the result of a revolution, and in that country, new revolutions are constantly occurring, and no one constitution endures. In Turkey when all of a sudden the Government was changed in the year 1909, congratulations came from all sides, but this was only a nine days' wonder. The change was like a dream. After that Turkey had to suffer much, and who knows how much more suffering is still in store for that brave people. On account of this experience, I am often plunged in anxiety."

CHAPTER II.

GOVERNMENT FORCES MAHATMAJI'S HANDS.

But how could Mahatmaji sit still without finding some remedy for the lawless campaign of repression started by the Government on all sides of the country, or without releasing the workers and popular leaders who had been clapped into prison without any reason or justification? Could he tolerate the forcible suppression of freedom of speech and freedom of association wantonly and deliberately indulged in by the Government? Mahatmaji felt that it was not possible for him to do so. He, therefore, made up his mind to start mass civil disobedience at Bardoli, with these as points at issue, and thereby draw the whole wrath and fury of the Government upon his own devoted head.

Mahatmaji started from the Ashram for Bardoli on 27th January, and at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee held at Surat on 31st January, he obtained the permission of the committee to start mass civil disobedience from Bardoli. On the 1st of February, he sent his ultimatum to the Viceroy in which His Excellency was asked to make the final decision on behalf of the Government by the 11th of February (1922). The Government reply to this ultimatum was given in a communique issued on 6th February (1922), refusing all the demands made by Mahatmaji. It was therefore finally decided on the 7th, that the campaign of civil disobedience would be started from the 12th. On the 7th February, Mahatmaji sent to the Press a long rejoinder to the Government communique, refuting the charges made by Lord Reading throwing the blame of the struggle upon the shoulders of the Non-co-operators, and declared that the Government had left no other way for the people to maintain their self-respect but to engage in the battle of civil disobedience.

In the meantime, Mr. Jinnah and his co-adjutors of the Bombay Conference had failed to elicit any reply from the Viceroy to their repeated representations. Although they

had been sending regular wires to His Excellency from the 16th of January, the only reply they received was a letter by post on 30th January from the Private Secretary to Lord Reading intimating that the Government was not prepared to summon the Round Table Conference proposed by the All-Parties Conference at Bombay. Then, the Secretaries of the conference asked for an interview with the Viceroy to which no reply was given. They even went to the extent of asking His Excellency to lay down his own terms, but without any response. The two week's time given by Mahatmaji to the conference authorities for negotiation with the Government having come to a close on 31st of January, the Secretaries of the conference approached Mahatmaji for an extension of the time-limit for four days more. Mahatmaji's ultimatum to the Viceroy was posted on 1st February, and was not sent to the Press before the 4th, the date on which it was expected to reach His Excellency's hands. Therefore, the four days' extension asked for by Messrs. Jinnah and Jayakar were obtained by them. And yet they publicly blamed Mahatmaji for not waiting for a further period, while the scant courtesy shown to them by the Viceroy who had not replied to their representations till the 30th January, or had refused to grant them an interview when they sought it, did not appear to have wounded their sense of self-respect at all.

CHAPTER.III.

A STUDY IN CONTRAST.

Mahatmajī's ultimatum to the Viceroy, then the Government communique, followed as it was by a rejoinder from Mahatmajī, constitute three of the most important documents of the non-co-operation movement, which should find a lasting place in the political history of India. The origin of the non-co-operation movement and the differences between the standpoints and arguments of the Indian people and those of the British Government in India on the points at issue, would be found recorded in them. We expect the reader to carefully read these documents printed in full in the next chapter. These documents are sufficient to bring out the difference in character between the two main actors of the drama, namely, Mahatma Gandhi on the side of the people, and Lord Reading as representative of an Imperialist Government; the truthfulness and transparent honesty of the one standing in striking contrast against the artfulness and diplomacy of the other. The refreshing candour of the confessions made by Mahatmajī in his ultimatum or in the rejoinder to the Government communique about the sins of commission by the Non-co-operators, or their weaknesses on account of the forces of violence not being properly brought under control should be compared with Lord Reading's emphatic denial that the Government had started any campaign of repression against the Non-co-operators. Said His Excellency in the communique referred to above:—"In the first place they (the Government) emphatically repudiate the statement that they have embarked on a policy of lawless repression," etc. And, again—"There is no shadow of justification for the charge that their policy has been one of indiscriminate and lawless repression."*

The reader of this book must be aware how upon the failure of the welcome-demonstrations organised by the Government in connection with the visit of the Prince of Wales to India, the Government of Lord Reading had

* For a detailed refutation of this palpable misstatement, see Appendix A;

started a campaign of wholesale arrests of leaders and workers throughout India, and about twenty-five thousand Indians were sent to prison. Besides, murderous assaults upon harmless volunteers or other Indian citizens under the direction of responsible officers of the Government, looting of Congress offices in broad day-light became almost of daily occurrence in North India, and there were cases of cold blooded murder by civil guards organised by the Government. In his rejoinder to the Government communique Mahatmaji mentioned nine such cases out of an immense list, and challenged the Government to disprove the allegations. Mons. Paul Richard, a well-known French writer, who was in India at the time, in the course of an interview stated that the graphic description of the atrocities committed by the authorities upon the Non co-operators in the Naini Jail of U P made him almost hopeless about the future of the human race. His exact words were as follows. —“When I read Mr Desai's letter in *Young India*, I became discouraged with our human race—especially that part of it which styles itself as civilised.” And yet the leader will find the Viceroy emphasising in his communique that he had not started any campaign of repression to suppress the movement of non-co-operation. His Excellency Lord Reading had come to India with the reputation of a great Judge, and had raised hopes in certain minds that he would deal impartially with the grievances of the people, and make an honest attempt to allay the discontent that had been swaying the country from one end to another. But Mahatmaji had his doubts. In an article in “*Young India*,” dated January 19, 1921, immediately after His Excellency's appointment as Viceroy of India, he wrote as follows —“Lord Reading has declared his intention to do the right. But the system which he is coming to administer will not permit him to do what is right. That is India's experience. If he succeeds in doing the right, I promise that he will also succeed in destroying the system or radically reforming it. Either he will swallow the system or the system will swallow him.” The communique issued by His Excellency in reply to Mahatmaji's ultimatum showed that the system had not merely swallowed him, but had assimilated him as thoroughly as to have changed him beyond recognition.

CHAPTER IV.
THE "ULTIMATUM."

To

His Excellency,
The Viceroy, Delhi.

Sir,

Bardoli is a small Tehshil in the Surat District in the Bombay Presidency, having a population of about 87,000 all told.

On the 29th ultimo, it decided under the presidency of Mr. Vithalbhai Patel to embark on mass civil disobedience, having proved its fitness for it in terms of the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee which met at Delhi during the first week of November last. But as I am perhaps chiefly responsible for Bardoli's decision, I owe it to Your Excellency and the public to explain the situation under which the decision has been taken.

It was intended under the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, before referred to, to make Bardoli the first unit for mass civil disobedience in order to mark the national revolt against the Government for its consistently criminal refusal to appreciate India's resolve regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj.

Then followed the unfortunate and regrettable rioting on the 17th November last in Bombay, resulting in the postponement of the step contemplated by Bardoli.

Meanwhile, repression of a virulent type has taken place, with the concurrence of the Government of India, in Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces, the Punjab, the Province of Delhi, and in a way in Bihar and Orissa and elsewhere. I know that you have objected to the use of the word "repression" for describing the action of the authorities in these provinces. In my opinion, when action is taken which is in excess of the requirements of a situation, it is undoubtedly repression. The looting of property, assaults

on innocent people, the brutal treatment of prisoners in the jails including flogging, can in no sense be described as legal, civilized, or in any way necessary. This official lawlessness cannot be described by any other term but lawless repression. Intimidation by Non-co-operators or their sympathisers to a certain extent in connection with hartals and picketing may be admitted, but in no case can it be held to justify the wholesale suppression of peaceful volunteering or equally peaceful public meetings under a distorted use of an extraordinary law which was passed in order to deal with activities which were manifestly violent both in intention and action, nor is it possible to designate as otherwise than repression, action taken against innocent people under what has appeared to many of us an illegal use of the ordinary law, nor again can the administrative interference with the liberty of the Press under a law that is under promise of repeal be regarded as anything but repression.

The immediate task before the country, therefore, is to rescue from paralysis freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of the press. In the present mood of the Government of India and in the present unprepared state of the country in respect of complete control of the forces of violence, Non-co-operators were unwilling to have anything to do with the Malaviya Conference whose object was to induce Your Excellency to convene a Round Table Conference. But as I was anxious to avoid all avoidable suffering I had no hesitation in advising the Working Committee of the Congress to accept the recommendations of that conference. Although in my opinion the terms were quite in keeping with your own requirements as I understood them through your Calcutta speech and otherwise, you have summarily rejected the proposal.

In the circumstances, there is nothing before the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands including the elementary rights of free speech, free association and free press. In my humble opinion, the recent events are a clear departure from the civilized policy laid down by Your Excellency at the time of the generous, manly and unconditional apology of the Ali Brothers, *viz.*, that the Government of India should not interfere with the activities of Non-co-operators so long

as they remained non-violent in word and deed. Had the Government's policy remained neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the adoption of civil disobedience of an aggressive type till the Congress had acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater discipline among the millions of its adherents. But this lawless repression (in a way unparalleled in the history of this unfortunate country) has made the immediate adoption of mass civil disobedience an imperative duty. The Working Committee of the Congress has restricted it to only certain areas to be selected by me from time to time, and at present it is confined only to Bardoli. I may, under said authority, give my consent at once in respect of a group of 100 villages in Guntur in the Madras Presidency, provided they can strictly conform to the conditions of non-violence, unity among different classes, the adoption and manufacture of handspun khadi and untouchability.

But before the people of Bardoli actually commence mass civil disobedience, I would respectfully urge you as the head of the Government of India finally to revise your policy and set free all the non-co-operating prisoners who are convicted or under trial for non-violent activities, and to declare in clear terms a policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country, whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs, or Swaraj, or any other purpose, and even though they fall under the repressive sections of the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws, subject always to the condition of non-violence. I would further urge you to free the Press from all administrative control and to restore all the fines and forfeitures recently imposed. In thus urging, I am asking Your Excellency to do what is being done to-day in every country which is deemed to be under civilized Government. If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this manifesto, I shall be prepared to advise postponement of civil disobedience of an aggressive character, till the imprisoned workers have, after their discharge, reviewed the whole

situation and considered the position de novo. If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion, and shall therefore have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding public opinion without violent restraint from either side, and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive civil disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality, or refuses to yield to clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India.

BARDOLI,
1st February, 1922.

I remain,
Your Excellency's faithful
servant and friend,
(Sd.) **M. K. GANDHI.**

CHAPTER V.
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA'S REPLY.

Delhi, February 6.

The Government of India (Home Department) issued the following communique in reply to Mr. Gandhi's letter:—

“The manifesto, issued by Mr. Gandhi on the 4th of February, justifying his determination to resort to mass civil disobedience, contains a series of mis-statements. Some of these are so important that the Government of India cannot allow them to pass unchallenged.

In the first place, they emphatically repudiate the statement that they have embarked on a policy of lawless repression and also the suggestion that the present campaign of civil disobedience has been forced on the non-co-operation party in order to secure the elementary rights of free association, free speech and of a free press. In the meantime the Government of India desire to draw attention to the fact that the decision to adopt a programme of civil disobedience was finally accepted on the 4th of November before the recent notifications relating either to the Seditious Meetings Act, or the Criminal Law Amendment Act to which Mr. Gandhi unmistakably refers, were issued. It was in consequence of serious acts of lawlessness, committed by persons who professed to be followers of Mr. Gandhi and the non-co-operation movement, that the Government were forced to take measures, which are in strict accordance with the law, for the protection of peaceful citizens in the pursuit of their lawful avocations.

2. Since the inauguration of the non-co-operation movement, the Government of India, actuated by a desire to avoid anything in the nature of repression of political activity, even though it was of an extreme character, have restricted their action in relation thereto to such measures as were necessary for the maintenance of law and order and the preservation of public tranquillity. Up to November no steps, save in Delhi last year, were taken

against Volunteer Associations. In November, however, the Government were confronted with a new and dangerous situation. In the course of the past year there had been systematic attempts to tamper with the loyalty of the soldiers and the police, and there had occurred numerous outbreaks of serious disorder directly attributable to the propaganda of the non-co-operation party amongst the ignorant and excitable masses. These outbreaks had resulted in grave loss of life, the growth of a dangerous spirit of lawlessness and increasing disregard for lawful authority. In November, they culminated in grave riots in Bombay in which 53 persons lost their lives and approximately four hundred were wounded. On the same date dangerous manifestations of lawlessness occurred in many other places, and at this period it became clear that many of the Volunteer Associations had embarked on a systematic campaign of violence, intimidation and obstruction, to combat which proceedings under the Penal Code of Criminal Procedure had proved ineffective.

In these circumstances the Government were reluctantly compelled to resort to measures of a more comprehensive and drastic character. Nevertheless, the operation of the Seditious Meetings Act was strictly limited to a few districts in which the risk of grave disturbances of the peace was specially great, and the application of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 was confined to associations the majority of the members of which had habitually indulged in violence and intimidation. It is impossible here to set out in detail the evidence which justified the adoption of these measures in the different provinces. Abundant proof is, however, to be found in the published proceedings of the various Legislative bodies, in the communiqué of different Local Governments and in the pronouncements of heads of Provinces. While resolute in their determination to enforce respect for law and order, and to protect loyal and peaceful subjects of the Crown, the Government have at the same time taken every precaution to mitigate, where desirable, the conditions of imprisonment, and to avoid any action which might have the appearance of vindictive severity. Ample proof of this will be found in the orders issued by Local Governments. Numerous offenders

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have been released, sentences have been reduced, and special consideration has been shown in the case of persons convicted of offences under the Seditious Meetings Act, or the Criminal Law Amendment Act. There is thus no shadow of a justification for the charge that this policy has been one of indiscriminate and lawless repression.

3. A further charge which has been brought by Mr. Gandhi is that the recent measures of the Government have involved a departure from "The civilised policy laid down by His Excellency at the time of the apology of the Ali Brothers namely, that the Government of India should not interfere with the activities of Non-co-operators so long as they remained non-violent in word and deed." The following citation from the communique of the Government of India issued on the 30th May, conclusively disproves this statement. After explaining that in view of the solemn undertaking contained in the statement over their signature, it had been decided to refrain from instituting criminal proceedings against Messrs. Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali, the Government of India observed:—"It must not be inferred from the original determination of the Government to prosecute for speeches inciting to violence, that promoting disaffection of a less violent character is not an offence against the law. The Government of India desire to make it plain that they will enforce the law relating to offences against the state as and when they may think fit against any person who had committed breaches of it."

It remains for the Government of India to deal with the allegation that His Excellency summarily rejected the proposal for a conference, although the terms put forward by the conference at Bombay and accepted by the Working Committee of the Congress were quite in keeping with His Excellency's own requirements as indicated in his speech at Calcutta. How far this is from being the case will be manifest from a comparison of His Excellency's speech with the terms proposed by the conference. His Excellency in that speech insisted on the imperative necessity, as a fundamental condition precedent to the discussion of any question of a conference, of the discontinuance of the unlawful activities of the non-co-operation party. No

assurance on this point was, however, contained in the proposals advanced by the conference.

On the contrary, whilst the Government were asked to make concessions which not only included the withdrawal of the notifications under the Criminal Law Amendment and Seditious Meetings Acts, and the release of persons convicted thereunder, but also the release of persons convicted of offences designed to affect the loyalty of the Army, and the submission to an Arbitration Committee of the cases of other persons convicted under the ordinary law of the land, there was no suggestion that any of the illegal activities of the Non-co-operators other than hartals, picketing and civil disobedience, should cease. Moreover, it was evident from statements, made by Mr. Gandhi at the conference, that he intended to continue the enrolment of volunteers in prohibited associations, and preparations for civil disobedience. Further, Mr. Gandhi also made it apparent that the proposed Round Table Conference would be called merely to register his decrees. It is idle to suggest that terms of this character fulfilled in any way the essentials, laid down by His Excellency or can reasonably be described as having been made in response to the sentiments expressed by him.

Finally, the Government of India desire to draw attention to the demands put forward in the concluding paragraph of Mr. Gandhi's present manifesto, which exceed even the demands made by the Working Committee of the Congress. Mr. Gandhi's demands now include (1) the release of all prisoners convicted or under trial for non-violent activities; (2) a guarantee that Government will refrain absolutely from interference with all non-violent activities of the non-co-operation party, even though they fall within the purview of the Indian Penal Code, or in other words, an undertaking that Government will indefinitely hold in abeyance, in regard to the Non-co-operators, the ordinary and long-established law of the land. In return for these concessions, he indicates that he intends to continue the illegal and seditious propaganda and operations of the non-co-operation party, and merely appears to postpone civil disobedience of an aggressive character until the offenders now in jail have had an opportunity of reviewing

the whole situation. In the same paragraph, he re-affirms the unalterable character of the demands of his party. The Government of India are confident that all right-thinking citizens will recognise that this manifesto constitutes no response whatever to the speech of His Excellency at Calcutta and that the demands made are such as no Government could discuss, much less accept.

5. The alternatives that now confront the people of India are such as sophistry can no longer obscure or disguise. The issue is no longer between this or that programme of political advance, but between lawlessness with all its dangerous consequences on the one hand, and on the other, the maintenance of those principles which lie at the root of all civilised Governments. Mass civil disobedience is fraught with such danger to the state that it must be met with sternness and severity. The Government entertain no doubt that in any measures which they may have to take for its suppression they can count on the support and assistance of all law-abiding and loyal citizens of His Majesty."

CHAPTER VI.

THE REJOINDER.

"I have very carefully read the Government's reply to my letter to His Excellency. I confess that I was totally unprepared for such an evasion of the realities of the case as the reply betrays. I will take the very first repudiation. The reply says:—"They (the Government) emphatically repudiate the statement that they have embarked on a policy of lawless repression and also the suggestion that the present campaign of civil disobedience has been forced on the non-co-operation party in order to secure the elementary rights of free association, free speech and a free press." Even a cursory glance at my letter would show that whilst civil disobedience was authorized by the All-India Congress Committee meeting held on the 4th November at Delhi, it had not commenced. I have made it clear in my letter that the contemplated mass civil disobedience was indefinitely postponed on account of the regrettable events of the 17th November in Bombay. That decision was duly published, and it is within the knowledge of the Government as also the public that Herculean efforts were being made to combat the still lingering violent tendency amongst the people. It is also within the knowledge of the Government and the public that a special form of pledge was devised to be signed by volunteers with the deliberate purpose of keeping out all but men of proved character. The primary object of these voluntary associations was to inculcate amongst the masses the lessons of non-violence, and to keep the peace at all non-co-operation functions. Unfortunately the Government of India lost its head completely over the Bombay events, and perhaps still more over the very complete hartal on the same date at Calcutta. I do not wish to deny that there might have been some intimidation practised in Calcutta, but it was not, I venture to submit, the fact of intimidation but the irritation caused by the completeness of the hartal that maddened the Government of India, as also the Government of Bengal. Repression

there was even before that time, but nothing was said or done in connection with it; but the repression that came in the wake of the notifications proclaiming the Criminal Law Amendment Act for the purpose of dealing with volunteer associations, and Seditious Meetings Act for the purpose of dealing with public meetings held by Non-co-operators, came upon the non-co-operation community as a bomb shell. I repeat, then, that these notifications and the arrests of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in Bengal, the arrest of Pandit Motilal Nehru and his co-workers in the U. P., and of Lala Lajpat Rai and his party in the Punjab made it absolutely necessary to take up not yet aggressive civil disobedience but only defensive civil disobedience, otherwise described as Passive Resistance. Even Sir Hormusjee Wadia was obliged to declare that if the Bombay Government followed the precedents set by the Governments of Bengal, U. P., and the Punjab, he would be bound to resist such notifications, that is, to enrol himself as a volunteer, or to attend public meetings in defiance of Government orders to the contrary. It is thus clear that a case has been completely made out for civil disobedience unless the Government revises its policy which has resulted in the stopping of public meetings, public associations, and the non-co-operation press in many parts of India.

FACTS BEYOND CHALLENGE.

Now for the statement that the Government 'have embarked on a policy of lawless repression.' Instead of an ample expression of regret and apology for the barbarous deeds that have been committed by officials in the name of law and order, I regret to find in the Government reply a categorical denial of any 'lawless repression.' In this connection I urge the public and Government carefully to consider the following facts, whose substance is beyond challenge:—

- (1) The official shooting at Entally in Calcutta and the callous treatment even of a corpse;
- (2) The admitted brutality of the Civil Guards;

(3) The forcible dispersal of a meeting at Dacca, and the dragging of innocent men by their legs, although they had given no offence or cause whatsoever ;

(4) Similar treatment of volunteers in Aligarh ;

(5) The conclusive (in my opinion) findings of the committee presided over by Dr. Gokul Chand Narang about the brutal and uncalled for assaults upon volunteers and the public in Lahore ;

(6) Wicked and inhuman treatment of volunteers and the public at Jullunder ;

(7) The shooting of a boy at Dehra Dun, and cruelly forcible dispersal of a public meeting at that place ;

(8) The looting admitted by the Behar Government of villages by an officer and his company without any permission whatsoever from any one, but as stated by Non-co-operators at the invitation of a planter, and the assaults upon volunteers and burning of khaddar and papers belonging to the Congress at Sonapur ;

(9) Midnight searches and arrests in Congress and Khilafat offices.

I have merely given a sample of the many "infallible proofs" of official lawlessness and barbarism. I have mentioned not even a tithe of what is happening all over the country, and I wish to state without fear of successful contradiction that the scale on which this lawlessness has gone on in so many Provinces of India puts into shade the inhumanities that were practised in the Punjab, if we except the crawling order and the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh. It is my certain conviction that the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh was a clean transaction compared to the unclean transactions described above, and the pity of it is that because people are not shot or butchered the experiences through which hundreds of inoffensive men have gone through do not produce a shock sufficient to turn every body's face against this Government, but as if this warfare against innocence was not enough, the reins are tightened in the jails. We know nothing of what is happening to-day in the Karachi jail, to a solitary prisoner in the Sabarmati jail and to a batch in Benares jail, all of whom are as

innocent as I claim to be myself. Their crime consists in their constituting themselves trustees of national honour and dignity. I am hoping that these proud and defiant workers will not be bent into submission to insolence masquerading in the official garb. I deny the right of the authorities to insist on high-souled men appearing before them almost naked, or pay any obsequious respect to them by way of salaaming with open palms brought together, or rising to the intonation of "Sarkar Ek hai." No God-fearing man will do the latter even if he has to be kept standing in stocks for days and nights as a Bengal schoolmaster is reported to have been.

For the sake of the dignity of human nature I trust that Lord Reading and his draftsmen do not know the facts that have been adduced, or that being carried away by their belief in the infallibility of their employees, refuse to believe in the statements which the public regard as God's truth. If there is the slightest exaggeration in the statements that I have made, I shall as publicly withdraw them, and apologize for them, as I am making them now, but as it is I undertake to prove the substance of every one of these charges if not the very letter, and much more of them, before any impartial tribunal of men or women unconnected with the Government. I invite Pandit Malaviyaji and those who are performing the thankless task of securing a Round Table Conference to form an impartial commission to investigate these charges by which I stand or fall.

It is the physical and brutal ill-treatment of humanity which has made many of my co-workers and myself impatient of life itself, and in the face of these things I do not wish to take public time by dealing in detail with what I mean abuse of the common law of the country. But I cannot help correcting the wrong impression which is likely to be created in connection with the Bombay disorders. Disgraceful and deplorable as they were, let it be remembered that of the 53 persons who lost their lives over 45 were Non-co-operators or their sympathisers the hooligans, and of the 400 wounded, to be absolutely on the safe side, over 350 were also derived from the same class. I do not complain. The Non-co-operators and the friendly hooligans got what they deserved. They began the violence—

they reaped the reward. Let it also not be forgotten that, with all deference to the Bombay Government it was Non-co-operators, ably assisted by Independents and Co-operators, who brought peace out of that chaos of the two days following the fateful 17th.

I must totally deny the imputation that "the application of the Criminal Law Amendment Act was confined to associations the majority of the members of which had habitually indulged in violence and intimidation." The prisons of India to-day hold some of the most inoffensive men and hardly any of whom have either resorted to violence or intimidation, and who are convicted under that law. Abundant proof can be produced in support of this statement as also of the statement of the fact that almost wherever meetings have been broken up there was absolutely no risk of violence.

The Government of India deny that the Viceroy had laid down upon the apology of the Ali Brothers the civilised policy of non-interference with the non-violent activities of Non-co-operators. I am extremely sorry for this repudiation. The very part of the communique reproduced in the reply is, in my opinion, sufficient proof that the Government did not intend to interfere with such activities. The Government did not wish it to be inferred that "speeches promoting disaffection of a less violent character were not an offence against the law." I have never stated that breach of any law was not to be an offence against it, but I have stated, as I repeat now, that it was not the intention of the Government then to prosecute for non-violent activities, although they amounted to a technical breach of the law.

CONDITIONS OF ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE.

As to conditions of the conference the Government reply evidently omits to mention the two words "and otherwise" after the words "Calcutta speech," in my letter. I repeat that the terms as I could gather from "the Calcutta speech and otherwise" were nearly the same that were mentioned in the resolutions of the Malaviya Conference. What are called unlawful activities of the non-co-operation party being a reply to the notifications of the Government

would have ceased automatically with the withdrawal of those notifications, because the formation of volunteer corps and public meetings would not be unlawful activities after the withdrawal of the offending notifications. Even while the negotiations were going on in Calcutta the discharge of Futwa prisoners was asked for, and I can only repeat what I have said elsewhere that if it is disloyal to say that Military or any service under the existing system of Government is a sin against God and humanity, I fear that such disloyalty must continue.

The Government communique does me a cruel wrong by imputing to me a desire that the proposed Round Table Conference should be called "merely to register my decrees." I did state in order to avoid any misunderstanding the Congress demands, as I feel I was in duty-bound in as clear terms as possible. No Congressman could approach any conference without making his position clear. I expected the ordinary courtesy of not considering me or any Congressman to be impervious to reason and argument. It is open to any body to convince me that the demands of the Congress regarding Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj are wrong or unreasonable, and I would certainly retrace my steps, and so far as I am concerned, rectify the wrong. The Government of India know that such has been always my attitude.

The communique strongly enough says that the demands set forth in my manifesto are even larger than those of the Working Committee. I claim that they fall far below the demands of the Working Committee, for what I now ask against total suspension of civil disobedience of an aggressive character is merely the stoppage of ruthless repression, the release of prisoners convicted under it, and a clear declaration of policy. The demands of the Working Committee included a Round Table Conference. In my manifesto I have not asked for a Round Table Conference at all. It is true that this waiving of a Round Table Conference does not proceed from any expedience, but it is a confession of present weakness. I freely recognise that unless India becomes saturated with the spirit of non-violence and generates disciplined strength that can only come from non-violence, she cannot enforce her demands,

and it is for that reason that I now consider that the first thing for the people to do is to secure a reversal of this mad repression and then to concentrate upon more complete organization and more construction, and here again the communique does me an injustice by merely stating that civil disobedience of an aggressive character will be postponed until the opportunity is given to the imprisoned leaders of reviewing the whole situation after their discharge, and by conveniently omitting to mention the following concluding sentences of my letter :—

“If the Government make the requested declaration, I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion, and shall therefore have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding public opinion without violent restraint from either side, and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive civil disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality, or refuses to yield to clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India.”

I venture to claim extreme reasonableness and moderation for the above presentation of the case.

THE ALTERNATIVE BEFORE PEOPLE.

The alternative before the people therefore is not, as the communique concludes, “between lawlessness with all its disastrous consequences on the one hand and on the other the maintenance of those principles which lie at the root of all civilised Governments.” “Mass civil disobedience” it adds “is fraught with such danger to the state that it must be met with sternness and severity.” The choice before the people is mass civil disobedience with all its undoubted dangers, and lawless repression of lawful activities of the people. I hold that it is impossible for any body of self-respecting men for fear of unknown dangers, to sit still and do nothing effective whilst looting of property and assaulting of innocent men are going on all over the country in the name of law and order.”

M. K. GANDHI.

PART VI

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CHAPTER I.

BIDDING FAREWELL TO ASHRAM.

The diary of incidents which I give below would describe Mahatmaji's daily activities, and all that I generally observed, during this period.

18th to 26th January:—Returning to the Ashram from Bombay where he had gone to attend the Malaviya Conference, Mahatmaji rested for three or four days, and then decided to start for Bardoli on the 26th January. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, who had accompanied him to Sabar-mati, left for Wardha on the 24th. Many letters were being received by Mahatmaji cautioning him against any indiscriminate or hasty step. The following short answer given by him on 21st January to a very particular friend of his would indicate the working of his mind at the time.

My dear—,

I assure you that I shall take no hasty step. I am constantly praying for light and guidance.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. Gandhi.

And now, as the day of Mahatmaji's leaving for Bardoli drew near, the ceremony of leave-taking started afresh at the Ashram. Under the leadership of "Ba" (Mrs. Gandhi), the women of the Ashram came in a body to meet him and take his directions about their duty in his absence. The students of the Ashram also saw him one day by appointment. He advised every one of them to concentrate on the Charka alone. On the evening of 28th January, the male members of the Ashram assembled in Mahatmaji's room to take his advice about their future activities. Mahatmaji wanted to know their opinion about the Ashram as an institution. In the course of the discussion that followed some said that the discipline of the Ashram was so rigorous that it hindered the growth of individuality among the members, while others held

the opposite view and said that the rigour and discipline having slackened, the spiritual atmosphere of the Ashram had been adversely affected. Mahatmaji whole-heartedly joined in this discussion, and concluded by advising the members to strive to maintain the ideal which was behind the establishment of this Ashram, *viz.*, that of serving India through Truth and Non-violence. Then after the early morning prayer on the 26th, he took what appeared to be a final leave of the members of the Ashram, and addressing them said that he did not know when he would return, or whether it would be possible for him to return at all. He explained that without true sacrifice and renunciation there could be no real service of India, and that true sacrifice and renunciation was possible only when one had developed spiritual power. He, therefore, advised the members to build their lives according to the ideal of the Gita. These words of Mahatmaji overwhelmed the Ashram people with sorrow and grief because of their fear that these might be the last words of advice they were privileged to hear from the lips of their master.

CHAPTER II.

BARDOLI AS HEAD QUARTERS.

27th January—We left the Ashram on the night of 26th January and reached Surat early in the morning of the 27th (6 A.M.) We had to change the train here for Bardoli. Before starting from the Ashram, Mahatmaji had told me that I should take the fewest things possible. We were going to the front, I thought, and there was no knowing how events would shape themselves. That, I imagined, was the reason for Mahatmaji's asking me to leave behind all things except those needed for immediate use.

As the train for Bardoli was about to leave Surat station, several people came running to inform me that I was required by Mahatmaji. I went to him immediately, when he said he had received a wire from Bombay containing requests from Messrs. Jinnah and Ambalal Sarabhai that he should leave for Bombay that very night. He said he would go, and then return to Bardoli on the 29th morning. As for me, his decision was that I should stay at Bardoli instead of accompanying him. Then, after a short pause, he said—"Bardoli will be our head quarters now. I shall arrange some quiet place for you where you can work uninterruptedly. You must try to write something for *Young India* every day." I replied that as he had desired that all heavy luggage should be left behind I had not carried the files and papers. He said—"You may send for them at once."

A whole crowd of volunteers had come from Bardoli to escort Mahatmaji to their place, and filled up the train from one end to another. There was no limit to their joy and enthusiasm, finding that Mahatmaji was going to lead them in their struggle for India's freedom. They began to sing a song in chorus, the refrain of which was—"Bardoli is India's Thermopylae." The song praised the heroism of the ancient Greeks, who by their sacrifice

and dauntless courage succeeded in thwarting the Persian Empire, and ended with a prayer that Bardoli might similarly be privileged to free India from the thralldom of the powerful British Government. We reached Bardoli at about 10 A.M., and went to our camp at the "Swaraj Ashram," situated near the railway station. Mahatmaji left for Bombay the very same evening.
28th January—

Mahatmaji having gone to Bombay, I remained buried under my papers the whole of the day, clearing up arrears of work. He had given me a separate room at a little distance from his own, which deprived me of the privilege of doing some personal service to him. His third son Ramdas was looking after him. Mr. V. J. Patel, then General Secretary of the Congress, had also come to Bardoli. Messrs. Dayalji, Kalyanji and Kumarji were the three principal leaders of the Bardoli people. Kumarji was the President of the Bardoli Taluka Parishad.

CHAPTER, III.

BARDOLI'S DECISION.

29th January—Mahatmaji returned from Bombay by the morning train. Mr. Jinnah and other members of the committee appointed by the Malaviya Conference pressed him hard to postpone the proposed civil disobedience at Bardoli for a further period, but without any effect. The Bardoli Taluka Conference held its session to-day. Although thousands of representatives from all sides of the Taluka had assembled at Bardoli on this occasion, their training and discipline was so admirable that they never came to flock round Mahatmaji's lodging, as was generally done by crowds elsewhere in India. In fact, one never felt that there was such a huge influx of people from other parts of the Taluka at Bardoli. Before going to attend this conference Mahatmaji met the workers in a private meeting held at his residence, and tried to persuade them to take an extension of fifteen days time to fulfil to his entire satisfaction the condition about making Bardoli self-contained in respect of its production of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. But the workers were unyielding. They promised that from the 1st of February (1922), they would not import any cloth from outside the Taluka, and would hold themselves responsible for clothing the 85,000 people of the Taluka with Khaddar produced within the Taluka itself. All round the "Swaraj Ashram" (Mahatmaji's residence) numbers of spinning wheel were lying arranged in heaps, and bullock-carts would come from the surrounding villages every now and then, and would return to their destinations loaded with these wheels. The workers used to say, these were their machine guns.

The main conference of the representatives of Bardoli assembled in the afternoon in a pandal specially erected for the occasion at a little distance from Mahatmaji's residence. The order and discipline shown by the crowd

at the conference was remarkable. Every one of the men and women assembled there seemed to know his or her mind thoroughly well, and they adopted a resolution intimating the Congress Working Committee that they are prepared immediately to start civil disobedience for the satisfaction of the demands of the Congress. Conditions of inter-communal unity, non-violence, adoption of Charka and Khaddar and removal of untouchability by Hindus were included in this resolution as indispensable for mass civil disobedience. Mahatmaji added two very expressive words to the condition of non-violence, *viz.*, "patience and endurance," and their implications were brought out when it was explained to the villagers that in the event of their starting civil disobedience they would have to suffer imprisonment, their properties would be confiscated, and what was more, they might even have to surrender their lives; and yet those four thousand representatives were unanimous in their resolve to continue the struggle. The resolution then advised those inhabitants of Bardoli who agreed to join the campaign of civil disobedience, and abide by the conditions laid down by the Congress, to withhold payment of their taxes. The full text of the resolution was as follows:—

"This conference is of opinion—

(a) That for the redress of India's grievances, unity among Hindus, Mahomedans, Parsis, Christians and other communities of India is absolutely necessary.

(b) That non violence, patience and endurance are the only remedy for the redress of the said grievances.

(c) That the use of the spinning-wheel in every home, and the adoption of hand-spun and hand-woven garments to the exclusion of all other cloth by every individual are indispensable for India's freedom.

(d) That Swaraj is impossible without complete removal of untouchability by the Hindus,

(e) That for the people's progress and for the attainment of freedom, readiness to sacrifice movable and immovable property, to suffer imprisonment and, if necessary, to lay down one's life, is indispensable.

"This conference hopes that the Bardoli Taluka will have the privilege to be the first for the aforesaid sacrifices, and this conference hereby respectfully informs the Working Committee that unless the Working Committee otherwise decides, or unless the proposed Round Table Conference is held, this Taluka will immediately commence mass civil disobedience, under the advice and guidance of Mr. Gandhi and the President of the conference.

"This conference recommends that those tax-payers of the Taluka who are ready and willing to abide by the conditions laid down by the Congress for mass civil disobedience, will refrain, till further instruction, from paying land revenue and other taxes due to the Government."

30th January—

To-day is a Monday, the day of Mahatmaji's silence. Nobody is present near him today. I went and sat in his room for a few hours and did some writing work. Today Mahatmaji addressed the following letter in Gujarati to the Patels* of Bardoli, which was printed and circulated throughout the Taluka.

"To the Patels of Bardoli,

By a resolution adopted yesterday, the Bardoli Taluka Parishad has committed itself to a very serious and solemn duty and has taken a grave responsibility on its shoulders. I trust that in this sacred work of regenerating the country, the Patels of Bardoli would fulfil to the fullest extent their part of the duty. Many of them have expressed their readiness to tender resignation. I hope that from now every Patel would begin to consider himself no longer a Patel under the Government (British), but a Patel under Swaraj (Indian self-rule). I, therefore, expect that their letters of resignation would be placed at our disposal without delay.

"I have not yet lost hope that the Government would become penitent, and purify itself. I therefore do not propose to submit the letters of resignation immediately.

* Patels are Headmen of villages, who help in the realisation of Government dues from the villagers.

But the moment civil disobedience was declared, we must be ready with our resignations; and must be in a position to submit them at once. That is to say, our preparations should be complete, so that we may not be caught napping. I therefore expect that every Patel would come here without delay, and personally deliver his letter of resignation to us."

BARDOLI:

30th January, 1922.

MOHANDAS K. GANDHI.

CHAPTER IV.

PERSONAL AND OTHER INCIDENTS.

31st January—

To-day there was to be a meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Surat. We left Bardoli at 8 in the morning, and reached Surat at 10 A.M. Mahatmaji was lodged at the Patidar Boarding, where the Working Committee would sit. As soon as we reached our lodging a telegram was received from Ahmedabad asking for instructions from Mahatmaji about the next issue of "Young India." He immediately advised me to leave for Ahmedabad by the next available train. I questioned him on a few points so as to understand my duty, but he appeared to be very much pre-occupied with other thoughts, and hurriedly dismissed me by saying—"Do what appears to be best; I want to rest assured by leaving the entire thing to you." He looked very thoughtful, and somewhat disturbed. In the meantime the members of the Working Committee had assembled in his room. The reply from the Viceroy to the representations of Messrs. Jinnah and Jayakar on behalf of the Malaviya Conference had been brought from Bombay by Mathradas Tricrumji, one of Mahatmaji's trusted workers in Bombay.

At Surat I formed my acquaintance with brother Shuaib Qureshi. I had written to him a letter some time ago under Mahatmaji's direction, addressing him as Maulana Shuaib. He therefore found me out at the Patidar Boarding, and corrected me by saying that he was no Maulana, but Shuaib, pure and simple.

1st February—

The whole of the day was spent amidst the din and bustle of the Navajivan Press at Ahmedabad. Then, I left for Bardoli by the 10 o'clock train at night.

2nd February—

Returned to Bardoli by the morning train, and from the station went straight to Mahatmaji's room. As soon as

I made my appearance, he simply overwhelmed me with marks of affection, and I felt almost stupefied for the time being. He said—"Since you had gone, my anxiety about this week's *Young India* was set at rest." Then, finding me somewhat exhausted owing to want of rest for two consecutive nights, he felt a little pity, and said—"I shall not send you to Ahmedabad a second time on an errand like this; I shall write to Ahmedabad to that effect today." But amidst all this flow of love, there were also some sweet scoldings for blunders in *Young India* that came to his notice. Then, he gave me copies of the telegram, and the "ultimatum" that had been sent to Lord Reading the previous day. The ultimatum to the Government had been drafted with so much of restraint and caution that I was charmed with it, and as soon as I finished reading it, I exclaimed—"It is excellent!" Mahatmaji was very much delighted when he heard that remark. He said—"I had no idea till the very last moment as to how to shape it; but it came out in this form almost automatically. Yes, I also feel that the draft has been faultless." I replied—"But those who delight in indulging in bravadoes, and are by nature vainglorious, would feel as if you had become nervous, and had reduced your claims out of a sense of weakness of your own position." He agreed with this remark. He then asked me to take particular care that the ultimatum did not go out to the Press before the 4th February, the day on which it was expected to reach Lord Reading's hands. Then, referring to *Young India* he said that it was necessary to publish every week an account of the repression pursued by the Government throughout the country, inasmuch as the publication of the "Independent" and other papers of the non-co-operation camp were ceasing by reason of Government persecution.

3rd February—

So many letters and reports had come for the last few days from all parts of the country that I was literally buried under them. I spent the whole of the day in clearing them. Mr. Shankerlal Banker came from Bombay by the evening train with what appeared to be a fresh term from Mr. Jinnah. It was reported about the camp that Mr.

Jinnah proposed that Mahatmaji should not insist on the selection of representatives to the Round Table Conference by popular vote, that is, by the four-anna franchise of the Congress. What he and his party desired was that members of all political parties (irrespective of their power or influence) should be represented in the conference. If Mahatmaji agreed to this condition, he was prepared to make another attempt to persuade the Government to summon a Round Table Conference; and in the event of the Government not responding, he promised to join the non-co-operation party. Mr. Banker further reported that the language of Mahatmaji's ultimatum to the Government was being adversely criticised by some people in Bombay, and there were others who took strong objection to his addressing Lord Reading as 'Sir,' instead of by the obsequious form—'May it please your Lordship.' Mahatmaji replied by saying that these people did not know the proper form of address to be used under the circumstance, and then strongly defended the language of the ultimatum.

4th February—

Today's morning train brought Syt. Ambalal Sarabhai from Bombay, who had a long private conversation with Mahatmaji. As I had other and more pressing duties to engage me, I suppressed curiosity to know the subject-matter of their talk. A telegram from the Private Secretary of Lord Reading was received today, saying that he had been anxiously waiting for Mahatmaji's letter (the "ultimatum").

From this evening Mahatmaji introduced the system of holding morning and evening prayers in his camp. He instructed all the workers and volunteers to get up and join the 4 o'clock prayer in the morning. A bell was brought to me, which I was to ring a few minutes before 4 A.M., to wake up the inmates of the camp. Syt. Jugatram of the "Navajivan" Press gave us a reading from the Gita, and sang a devotional song during the prayer this evening.

5th February—

I woke up the whole camp before 4 o'clock this morning. This new instruction from Mahatmaji seemed to have

made the people more or less uneasy, because they had not been used to waking up so early. Syt. Vithalbhai Patel, General Secretary of the Congress (now President of the Legislative Assembly), suffering from gout in his limbs, sat up on his bed with the words "Narayan, Narayan"* on his lips. His eyes were struggling to go back to sleep. But Mahatmaji was a zealous master, and his orders were irrevocable. The morning prayer continued till half past four in the morning without anything special to mention. But during the evening prayer Mahatmaji addressed a few words of advice to us. He said that although he had been working in the domain of politics, he was, truly speaking, a seeker after salvation. If he knew that he could obtain salvation by renouncing his present activities, and by digging the earth as a labourer, he would immediately give up politics and engage himself as an ordinary labourer. Then, he explained that self-restraint was the foundation of all spirituality. He said, restraint should be both internal and external. Desire for things of the world for self-gratification was opposed to the idea of restraint. Therefore, in order to attain true Brahmacharya, one must conquer the lust for things of the world. A person endowed with such restraint automatically came face to face with Truth. To illustrate his point, Mahatmaji explained the following sloka of the Gita:—

विषया विनिवृत्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनाः ।

रसवजं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवृत्तते ॥

(Translation—Those who starve their senses may restrain their sense of enjoyment; but the desire for gratification is lost only when one comes face to face with the Supreme).

Then, continued Mahatmaji—"You may imagine from the outside that I have achieved some restraint over the outgoing tendencies of my mind; but that is nothing. This is not true Brahmacharya. How could you know the anarchy that prevails within my mind, and the number of

* 'Narayan' is a name of God. Syt. Vithalbhai was in the habit of uttering 'Narayan, Narayan' on all possible occasions.

falls that I sustain every day." The child-like simplicity with which he uttered these words produced a deep impression on all, and kept us all spell-bound for some length of time.

Today Mr. Bomanji came from Bombay with a stenotypist and a car for Mahatmajī's use. The stenotypist, Mr. Golikere, is a qualified man, and rendered great relief to Mahatmajī. This morning Mahatmajī gave a long interview to a representative of the "Bombay Chronicle," and after lunch left for a village at some distance to attend a conference of the untouchable classes of Bardoli.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRESS INTERVIEW.

Relevant portions of the interview with the representative of the "Bombay Chronicle" are printed below. From this the reader will be able to have an insight into the projected campaign of civil disobedience at Bardoli, and also the reason for Mahatmaji's selecting Bardoli to the exclusion of other places, for conducting this campaign. In the next succeeding chapter the reader will also find translations of portions of two articles from the Gujarati *Navajivan* dealing with Bardoli. While describing the reasons for Bardoli's precedence over other parts of India for the purpose of civil disobedience, Mahatmaji has explained in these articles the real character of the struggle in which India was then engaged, and the vital need of non-violence for the realisation of India's goal.

Interview with a representative of the "Bombay Chronicle."

Q. Do you expect to be arrested the moment Bardoli begins mass civil disobedience, and are you convinced after your stay in Bardoli for over a week that the movement will not collapse in your absence?

Mahatmaji. It is very difficult to say what Government will do to me when the time-limit expires. But I certainly do not expect the people of Bardoli to collapse immediately I am arrested. But if they do collapse Government's action in arresting me will be certainly justified by reason of any such weakening. If India is really ready then my arrest like the arrests of all other workers must result in non-co-operation activities being stimulated, and the atmosphere of non-violence being retained. Personally, I have no misgivings on the point, but it is difficult for anybody to say with certainty what will happen after my arrest. There is so much superstition regarding my supposed powers, human and super-human, that sometimes I feel that my

imprisonment, deportation and execution would be quite justified. This belief in the possession of super-human powers by me is really a bar to national progress, and Government will deserve the thanks of reasonable humanity if they remove me from the people's midst, and do not afterwards become mad themselves; but deal with people with justice and without terrorism. But recent events do not fill me with any such hope about the Government.

Q. Can you still maintain in the face of cases of assault and flogging, and still many more sufferings on an extensive scale in the future, that the present movement is the shortest cut to Swaraj with minimum of suffering?

Mahatmaji. I have no doubt about it, because painful as the sufferings are, they would be still more painful if there was retaliation on the part of the people. If people remain sufficiently non-violent, Government efforts would be exhausted for want of reaction. It is a scientific truth which admits of no exception. Therefore, whatever sufferings the people might have to go through now would be a hundred times greater, if they offered violence against Government violence.

Q. May I know if the sufferings of hundreds of young-men in jails weigh upon your decision to take steps regarding mass civil disobedience? Do you not think that they should be honourably acquitted as early as possible, having gained all that they fought for?

Mahatmaji. Certainly; and therefore it is that I have made their release and stoppage of all barbarity the exclusive issue for mass civil disobedience at the present moment.

Q. Do you not expect Government to baffle your attempts by conniving at your mass civil disobedience activities at least for a long time to come? Can they not forego their land revenue, or postpone it till some distant day, rather than precipitate an undesirable situation. What steps do you propose to take in that case.

Mahatmaji. Government can certainly do that. If they do so, I will respect their wisdom and restraint by refraining from taking any irritating action. But that really means that Bardoli having attained her freedom,

her example would be infectious, and unless Government want to yield to popular opinion they will make it a point of prestige to collect revenue at the point of the bayonet.

Q. Are you convinced that Bardoli is really fit to undertake civil disobedience? Has Bardoli become self-sufficient so far as production of pure khadi is concerned?

Mahatmaji. So far as I can see, I certainly think that Bardoli is fit. No Taluka is so much insured against non-violence as Bardoli is, and this assurance has undoubtedly counted with me a great deal in making up my mind. It has not been self-sufficient as yet in regard to its production of khaddar, but it will be so presently. People are willing, but further organisation is necessary.

Q. May I know, if you do not mind, what is going to be your first move in respect of mass civil disobedience?

Mahatmaji. My first move naturally would be to consolidate the movement for non-payment, and then I shall have to see in what other directions I can offer civil disobedience without any danger of violence. You will remember, I have the whole of the Statute Book to break through, save those portions which are also a part of the moral Government of the universe.

CHAPTER VI.

BARDOLI'S CLAIMS.

(Being translation of portions of two articles in Gujarati by Mahatmaji appearing in his weekly paper the *Navajivan*.)

I

"The people of Bardoli are plain, simple folks ; they know no luxury. They are not rich, neither are they very poor. They are not an unruly people, and yet they are no cowards. It is not their habit to engage in social, internecine quarrels. Their relation with the Government has been always sweet. They have no local grievances. They have decided to enter this fearful struggle with no other motive but offering themselves as willing sacrifices for the sake of India, and have been trying their best to qualify themselves in terms of the Congress resolution. Although they have not entirely fulfilled the condition about khaddar, *viz.*, of becoming self-contained in respect of their production of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, they have now concentrated their efforts to that end. I do not know of any other part of India where the curse of untouchability has been removed to the same extent as at Bardoli. Therefore, I hold that if there is any Taluka qualified to undertake this struggle, that is Bardoli.

"Some might imagine that the people of Bardoli being mild, docile and peaceful, would easily get demoralised when they were imprisoned ; would fear death, and would surrender themselves when the Government should begin to confiscate their property. But my previous experience tells me that it was only people of this nature who could suffer persecution without retaliation, and without creating any disturbance. Those who are by nature unruly and excitable cannot suffer much pain ; they become anxious to inflict pain on others, rather than suffer it themselves.

"It is time that people realised that only mild and docile people should enlist themselves on our side in this

battle. This battle is not intended to make mild people unruly, but to make them brave and fearless. On the other hand, it is intended to make unruly and riotous people docile, mild and peaceful. If any one should imagine that we can achieve victory in this war by filling the gaols with people of mischievous or disreputable character, then I must declare at once that our defeat will begin from the moment the movement takes that turn; because in that case the leadership will pass into the hands of mischievous people, and the law that 'might is right' will begin to hold its sway in the land.

"Riots, double-dealing, pride, diplomacy, use of brute-force, these are the things that we want to avoid, and instal in their places non-violence, straightforwardness, truth and soul-force. It is for this reason that I advocate non-violence. Our ideal will be reached when non-violence is joined to fearlessness. I expect this kind of non-violence from Bardoli."

II

"Bardoli is a small Taluka; the people of this Taluka have no learning; they do not understand politics; and they are as mild as lambs. This last is their special qualification. They have capacity to think for themselves; and they know how to discriminate between selfish and unselfish action. Those whose vision is clear need have no fear from this struggle. The lamb does not willingly advance towards the butcher; but when the people of Bardoli will welcome the prison, will allow their things to be confiscated with the faith of a child, and will accept death without any ill-feeling towards their persecutors, the whole world will bend itself to offer its homage to them. They will then achieve Swaraj for India, and their names will be indelibly written in letters of gold in the annals of Indian history

'Although Ahmedabad is my place of residence, and considered from points of view of wealth, intellect or bravery superior to Bardoli, still I have selected Bardoli for this campaign of civil disobedience. In this very choice lies the inwardness of this fight. Swaraj for India would come only when a mild and poor Taluka like Bardoli

would give an abiding illustration of her non-violence and courage. This battle is intended to be conducted by humble and innocent people to save the weak and the oppressed from the persecution and exploitation of the strong and the powerful. That will be possible by Bardoli's victory. I am incapable of conducting this campaign either at Ahmedabad or at Bombay, in spite of all the wealth and glory of those places. For there I shall have always to guard myself against fraud and wickedness. Here at Bardoli I have no such fear. But if Bardoli also practises double-dealing with me, then God alone can say what my plight will be."

6th February—

Today is a Monday, and Mahatmaji is observing his silence. The morning train brought Mr. V. J. Patel, who had gone to Bombay for a day, and Mr. Andrews, from Bombay. Mahatmaji addressed to the people of Bardoli a manifesto in Gujarati an English rendering of which is given below :—

"Brothers and sisters of Bardoli,

I have decided to publish from time to time, and as regularly as possible, open letters like the one I am addressing you today, for informing you about things in general, and also for your guidance.

The responsibility that you and I have jointly taken is not a small one. The fact is that the whole weight of India now lies on our shoulders. You have made your choice to pass through this fiery ordeal for the sake of India.

You have of your own free will and choice decided to make the greatest sacrifice possible, and to fulfil your vow have been preparing yourself by a gradual process of purification.

May God bless your efforts. But you must remember also that God only helps those who help themselves.

It has given me very great pleasure to learn that the doors of eighteen national schools have been opened for admission of boys of the untouchable class to their rolls. So long as there is a single national school without un-

touchable boys, the resolution of the Taluka Parishad on this point must be regarded as not having been fully carried out.

Similarly, every household must have its spinning wheel, and every Non-co-operator must discard all other cloth except hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar.

It is my desire that henceforward not a single enlightened tenant of Bardoli should submit his dues to the authorities. The Government may be permitted to confiscate all his belongings, if it so desires. We must be prepared to suffer this much of loss at any rate.

There are some who ask—‘What would happen if the Government took possession of all our lands, and drove us out of our hearths and homes?’ My answer is that it does not appear to me likely that the Government would immediately take that extreme step, provided it desired to follow a civilised method in its war against the civil resisters. But we must not doubt that it has the power to do so. We must therefore be prepared to give up our hearths and homes, should the occasion demand it. Those who are determined to have Swaraj must be confident that their lands would be returned to them as soon as Swaraj was obtained. When there is a violent war, the warriors go to battle with this conviction in their minds that they would get back their possessions as soon as victory was attained. In this peaceful and non-violent war, the result should not and cannot be otherwise. We must therefore be prepared for loss of our lands, when the battle is in progress.

This battle is based, firstly, on confidence in ourselves, and, secondly, on faith in God, and my heartfelt prayer is that all of you may possess that confidence and that faith.

Your servant and well-wisher,
MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI."

7th February—

This morning Mahatmaji proposed during prayer time that he would regularly conduct a Gita class, and started to give the first lesson today. His method was to read a line of a *sloka* himself, and then to ask us to recite it in

chorus. He was very particular about the true accent, and pronounciation of Sanskrit words. He advised even those who did not understand the meaning of the Gita to practise regular recitation of the *slokas*, and commit them to memory. He seemed to have faith in the old Sanskrit saying—*आहन्ति सर्वं शास्त्राणां बोधोदयि गरिष्यते* । (Recitation of the Shastras is superior to even an understanding of their sense).

When the post arrived at about 10 in the morning, we found Lord Reading's communique in reply to Mahat-maji's ultimatum published in the daily papers. At the very outset of the communique His Excellency stated—"They (the Government) emphatically repudiate the statement that they have embarked on a policy of lawless repression." This statement took us by surprise. Mahat-maji immediately began to dictate his rejoinder to the Government communique, which was wired to the Associated Press at Delhi. One copy was sent to the *Bombay Chronicle* for publication, and Mr. Bomanji, who left for Bombay this evening, took another copy with him.

CHAPTER VII.

NEWS OF CHAURI CHAURA: THE PRECEDING OMENS.

The 8th of February, 1922 is a memorable day in the political history of India. It was on the previous day that Mahatmaji had hurled defiance at the Government in his rejoinder to Lord Reading's communique issued in reply to the ultimatum from Bardoli. But on the 8th, he suddenly turned round, and decided that he must suspend all aggressive activities of the Congress directed towards mending or ending the present system of Government in India. When the newspapers of the day arrived at about 10 in the morning, the report about the gruesome incident at Chauri Chaura at first escaped Mahatmaji's notice. But subsequently, perhaps in the course of a conversation with Mr. V. J. Patel, his attention was drawn to it. Then, he sent for the papers again, and read the brief telegraphic report of an excited mob attacking the police station at Chauri Chaura, setting fire to it, and burning to death a body of about twenty-one policemen. Mahatmaji was very much agitated when he read the news, and immediately decided that he should have to suspend all activities towards civil disobedience going on along the length and breadth of the country.

A few days before this incident he had been apprised by a report submitted by the U. P. Congress Committee that in the district of Gorakhpur alone (Chauri Chaura is within that district), thirty-four thousand national volunteers had been enlisted, and the total number of volunteers in the whole province had gone up to more than a lakh. It also came to his knowledge that not even one-fourth of the above number had taken to khaddar as their wear, the most essential condition a volunteer was required to observe under the rules laid down by the Congress. It could, therefore, be imagined that very few of them understood the secret of civil, that is, peaceful disobedience. About this time, Mahatmaji had also received a letter with

numerous signatures of small landholders of U. P., which stated that although they had been working heart and soul for the furtherance of the non-co-operation movement, their tenants had withheld payment of their dues, and had been threatening them with violence if they attempted to realise the same. Similarly, a big land-holder from U. P. informed Mahatmaji that he had been forced to take shelter under Government for safeguarding his own interest, and also for the protection of his family, inspite of his sympathies being with the national movement. From Bengal, a very well-known and popular Zemindar wrote to Mahatmaji saying that his dues had been withheld by his tenants. All this was thoroughly unauthorised activity, and was being pursued in contravention of the resolution of the Congress Working Committee, which had definitely declared that the Congress did not desire that the dues of Zemindars and Landholders should in any case be withheld by their tenants.

Then, again, Mahatmaji learnt that a person named Motilal had made himself very popular among the Bhils of Rajputana by declaring himself a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. He had gathered a large following, and had started a campaign of non-payment of taxes against the State of Udaipur, and other Indian principalities of Rajputana. Pandit Ramakanta Malaviya, Minister of the Sirohi State, came one day and informed Mahatmaji that the emissaries of Motilal had been preaching among the Bhils of Sirohi that Mahatmaji's order was that none should pay any tax exceeding rupee one and four annas. Mahatmaji had no sort of acquaintance with, or knowledge of Motilal, and he was perturbed to learn that the latter had been utilising his name for influencing and exciting such an ignorant and primitive people as the Bhils of Rajputana.*

* Later on Mahatmaji sent a messenger to Rajputana and ascertained that Motilal had introduced many reforms among the Bhils, such as prohibition of liquor and meat-eating, and that on the whole his influence had been beneficial for the Bhil community. But as he always kept himself surrounded by a large body of followers, the States of Rajputana looked upon him with suspicion. After Mahatmaji's arrest and imprisonment this movement of reform among the Bhils was forcibly suppressed by the States, and fire-arms were freely used against that helpless and submissive people.

Mahatmaji had, indeed, decided to start the campaign of non-payment of taxes at Bardoli, but at the same time he had been strongly advising that no such effort should be made in any other part of India, without his express permission previously obtained. He was strongly of opinion that civil non-payment could not be successfully carried on by those who were insubordinate, unruly and mischievous by nature, because it was not possible for them to maintain the non-violent character of the movement for any length of time. Similarly, he held that those who were habitually inclined to withhold payment of their taxes were unqualified to join a No-Tax Campaign, if it was to be conducted along peaceful lines. Therefore, according to him it would be the height of unwisdom to start a campaign of non-payment simultaneously at many places without first training the people along lines of non-violence and peace. Referring to this aspect of the matter, he thus wrote in an article in "Young India," dated 26th January, 1922, entitled "Non-payment of Taxes":—

"Even as civil disobedience is difficult in the case of a habitual offender against the laws of the State, so is *civil* non-payment difficult for those who have hitherto been in the habit of withholding payment of taxes on the slightest pretext. Civil non-payment of taxes is indeed the last stage in non-co-operation. We must not resort to it till we have tried the other forms of civil disobedience. And it will be the height of unwisdom to experiment with non-payment in large or many areas in the beginning stages."

Such were Mahatmaji's views on the matter. But information was pouring in from all sides that the cry for non-payment had been taken up by the people with ever-growing enthusiasm although the injunctions of the Congress were definitely against it. Besides, Mahatmaji came to know that in places like Jhajha, Bulandshahr and Shaharanpur the volunteers had taken possession of the municipal Town Halls without asking for sanction from the Working Committee. Ever since November (1921), when the idea of civil disobedience was first definitely mooted in the country in connection with the movement of non-co-operation, Mahatmaji had been harping upon the fact that he was the only expert in this method of political warfare, and that

therefore no aggressive step should be taken anywhere except under his own personal supervision and guidance. He expected other workers to render him help and co-operation by remaining peaceful themselves, and by maintaining the peace of the country. A resolution of the Congress Working Committee (31st January, 1922) emphasised the very same view of Mahatmaji. Thus:— "The Working Committee advises all other parts of India to co-operate with the people of Bardoli Taluka by refraining from mass or individual civil disobedience of an aggressive character, except upon the express consent of Mahatma Gandhi previously obtained."

But the incidents of Bulandshahr and Shaharanpur gave a clear indication that the Congress workers of those places did not consider it binding upon them to follow the instruction of this resolution. It was also within Mahatmaji's knowledge that preparations were going on at many places to start aggressive civil disobedience as soon as Bardoli had started it, although this would have involved a defiance of the injunctions of the Congress Working Committee. All these defects and limitations in our organisation had been no doubt oppressing him; but he had expected to remedy them gradually, when the Chauri Chaura incident came as a bolt from the blue, and shattered his hopes to pieces. He at once proceeded to restrain with a stern and determined hand, the rising tide of discontent and disobedience in all parts of the country. For it was clear to him as day-light that if while going to disobey the laws of the Government, the authority of the Congress was thrown overboard, there would be nothing to prevent anarchy and chaos overtaking the land.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAHATMAJI DECIDES ON HALT: WORKING COMMITTEE CALLED.

The civil disobedience at Bardoli, as the reader is aware, was to have been started on the 12th February (1922), on the expiry of the time-limit granted to the Viceroy to reconsider the position of the Government in respect of the demands set forth in Mahatmaji's ultimatum. But Mahatmaji suddenly changed his whole plan of action on the 8th, and on the same day circulated a private letter to the members of the Working Committee indicating this change. A meeting of the Working Committee was thereupon summoned to meet at Bardoli on 11th February. Then, on receipt of a telegram from Pandit Malaviya, he left for Bombay by the evening train of the 8th. The private communication from Mahatmaji to members of the Working Committee referred to above is published below:—

Confidential (not for publication).

BARDOLI,

8th February, 1922.

DEAR FRIEND,

This is the third time that I have received a rude shock when I have been on the eve of embarking upon mass civil disobedience. The first was in April 1919, the second in November last, and now again I am violently agitated by the events in the Gorakhpur District. What has happened in Bareilly and Shaharanpur where volunteers have been attempting to take possession of Town Halls has added considerably to the shaking. The civil disobedience of Bardoli can make no impression upon the country when disobedience of a criminal character goes on in other parts of the country, both for the same end. The whole conception of civil disobedience is based upon the assumption that it works in and through its completely non-violent character. I may be a bad student of human nature

to believe that such an atmosphere can ever be brought about in a vast country like India, but that would be an argument for condemning my capacity for sound judgment, not for continuing a movement which is in that case bound to be unsuccessful. I personally can never be party to a movement half-violent and half-non-violent, even though it may result in the attainment of so-called Swaraj, for it will not be real Swaraj as I have conceived it. A meeting of the Working Committee is therefore being called to consider the question on the 11th instant at Bardoli, first whether mass civil disobedience should not be suspended for the time being ; and secondly, whether if it is suspended it should not be discontinued for a definite and sufficiently long period to enable the country to do organising constructive work and to establish an indisputably non-violent atmosphere. I want to have the guidance of all the friends I can. I would like you to send me your opinion even though you may not be able to attend, either by letter, if it reaches in time, or by wire.

I am sending this letter only to the members of the Working Committee, but I would like you to consult all the friends you meet, and if any of them wishes to come to take part in the deliberations please bring or send him, or them.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) M. K. GANDHI.

The subsequent daily incidents are described below in the form of a diary, the facts being taken from notes and letters written by me at the time :

9th February—

Mahatmaji has gone to Bombay at the invitation of Pandit Malaviya. That he had suddenly changed his mind about starting civil disobedience at Bardoli was not known to more than two or three of his most intimate associates even at Bardoli. The general impression was that the campaign would be started on the 12th, and so people from outside have begun to assemble at Bardoli. The evening train brought Mr. Shankerlal Banker, Mr. Gokhale of the "Maharatta" of Poona, Mr. Mandlik of the "Lokamanya"

of Bombay, Imam Saheb of Sabarmati Ashram, and a host of others whom I did not know. Mr. Gokhale said they had all come to see the beginning of the memorable battle to be started on the 12th. Then, he enquired whether the Chauri Chaura incident had produced any adverse effect on Mahatmaji's mind. I avoided a direct answer to this query, and merely said that the Working Committee had been summoned to meet on the 11th when the matter would be finally decided. Mr. Banker, however, who had access to Mahatmaji's papers saw the confidential letter that had been circulated to members of the Working Committee, and came to know that Mahatmaji had contemplated a complete change of plan.

10th February—

Mahatmaji returned from Bombay by the morning train. The same train brought to Bardoli Mr. Bomanji, Syt. Vallabhbhai Patel, Mathradas Trieramji, and a crowd of other people. Mahatmaji invited Pandit Malaviyaji, and Messrs. Natarajan and Jayakar to come to Bardoli to attend the meeting of the Working Committee to be held to-morrow. Intimation was received about Mr. Kelkar coming to-morrow. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj came from Wardha by the evening train.

A messenger from Gorakhpur came today with detailed information about Chauri Chaura, and described the whole incident to Mahatmaji. Mr. Shuaib Qureshi was asked to take down his statement. Another young man came from U. P., who finding Mahatmaji alone for a while quietly went up to him, and enquired—"Sir, when will you order the lands owned and controlled by the Zemindars to be distributed among the tenants?" Mahatmaji was very much annoyed at the question, and rebuked the young man, and asked him as to who had taught him that he (Mahatmaji) desired the lands belonging to the Zemindars to be distributed. The young man was taken aback by the vehemence with which Mahatmaji expressed his disgust, and immediately left his presence.

CHAPTER IX.

CONFERENCE WITH WORKERS, LEADERS AND OTHERS : ITS RESULTS.

This afternoon Mahatmaji summoned to his room the whole body of workers, and all those who were present at Bardoli today, to discuss with him the propriety or otherwise of starting civil disobedience in the face of the terrible happening at Chauri Chaura. He asked for the opinion of everyone present. There were two young boys, who had come into the room perhaps out of childish curiosity, but they were also asked by Mahatmaji to express their views. Starting with Mr. V. J. Patel, Messrs. Bomanji, Gokhale, Mandlik and Dayalji, almost everyone, young and old, declared with one united voice that it was unthinkable to suspend the fight at that stage ; that if Mahatmaji retreated after throwing out a challenge to Lord Reading in the manner he had done by his rejoinder to the Government communication, the whole country would be disgraced before the world. Only three persons dissented from this view, and said that the temper of the country had risen, and that the starting of civil disobedience under that condition might bring about other and more terrible catastrophes. One of them specially emphasised that the people had become so much infuriated that he would not be surprised if they went to wreck their vengeance upon the Moderates and massacre them upon their failure to do any direct injury to the Government.

Mahatmaji gave a very patient hearing to all the views and opinions brought forward before the meeting, and then said :—"I regard those who have assembled here as some of the best workers in the country. In fact, I can see the condition of India at the present time truly reflected by this small assembly. What I have heard now confirms me in the belief that most of those who are present here have failed to understand the message of non-violence. This convinces me that the country at large has not at all

accepted the teaching of non-violence. 'I must, therefore, immediately stop the movement for civil disobedience.'

As soon as he finished this observation, Mahatmaji adopted a grave, and somewhat stern attitude, which made the workers quietly leave his room, one by one. The knowledge that Mahatmaji had finally made up his mind to suspend civil disobedience caused a deep dejection in their spirits. Those who had been trifling with the Chauri Chaura incident by saying that it was not worthy of being taken into consideration, or had been joking with observations that life became insipid without some excitement, without some exhibition of violence in moderate form, now thought that perhaps their light-hearted talks on the subject had brought about a catastrophic change on Mahatmaji's mind. They began to feel that their hopes and dreams had been shattered to pieces. The shock had been so great that it seemed to have temporarily unhinged one prominent gentleman, who began to move about the whole camp, shouting at the top of his voice, 'Why should violence be so much deprecated,' 'what harm if there was a little justifiable violence, here and there.' These were the words constantly on his lips, and he stopped every one, who happened to come near him, to argue the point with him. Seth Jammalal Bajaj, who had arrived by the evening train, found the whole camp in a state of confusion and disorder. He came to my room, and asked me—"Krishnadasji, what is your opinion?" I replied—"So far as I can see, the advocates of violence were gathering strength under Mahatmaji's ægis, and unless they are isolated, it will be difficult to keep the movement non-violent, or to fulfil the object for which Mahatmaji has been working." He agreed with me, and went straight and engaged himself in an argumentative combat with the gentleman, who had made himself so prominent over the matter.

Mahatmaji's grave demeanour, indicating, as it did, the agony from which he was suffering, was to us a source of much apprehension. Whispers were going round the camp that he had been contemplating a two weeks' fast in expiation of the crime of Chauri Chaura. This frightened us considerably, as we did not know whether his frail body

was capable of sustaining the effects of such a prolonged fast. At night Mathradas found an opportunity of asking Mahatmaji whether he was seriously thinking of giving up his body. He replied—"No; I imagine God has yet some purpose to serve with this body. I have no desire to give up the body immediately."

11th February—

The Congress Working Committee meets today. The first thing Mahatmaji did in the morning was to draft a resolution suspending the projected civil disobedience at Bardoli, and all other aggressive activities going on throughout the country. He then asked me to give the draft to Mr. Shuaib for his opinion. A little while later I saw Mr. Shuaib coming to Mahatmaji's room very much alarmed and agitated. Meeting me on the way he said that he knew it was impossible to dislodge Gandhiji from a position once he (Gandhiji) had made up his mind; but still he must try. He, indeed, tried his best to persuade Mahatmaji to tone down the terms of the resolution, but without any effect.

Then, the morning train arrived. The people who came from outside and assembled in Mahatmaji's camp were so numerous that the place put on the appearance of a busy fair. Among the invited guests came Pandit Malaviya, and Messrs. Jayakar and Natarajan from Bombay. Messrs. Chotani, Moazzam Ali, Zahur Ahmed, and a few others came on behalf of the Central Khilafat Committee. Those among the new-comers who held the non-co-operation view looked absolutely helpless and bewildered, when they came to learn Mahatmaji's final decision. Some of them tried to induce Mahatmaji not to suspend civil disobedience in a hurry. But Mahatmaji was adamant.

Before the Working Committee sat for its deliberations, there was a general informal meeting of all people assembled at Bardoli on that day. Pandit Malaviyaji, Messrs. Natarajan, Jayakar, Moazzam Ali and Zahur Ahmed expressed their opinions on the situation. Pandit Malaviyaji, who spoke first said that the foresight shown by Mahatmaji in suspending civil disobedience in the atmosphere of excitement then prevailing in the country was simply incomparable. By this one act of his, Mahatmaji had

established his title to greatness for all time, and would be remembered by posterity as a great benefactor of India. Mr. Jayakar said that it was his firm belief that except Mahatmaji there was no one else in this world who could have ventured to suspend civil disobedience in that situation. The sacrifice, determination, strength of will, and devotion to Truth shown by him in this connection was bound to instal him in the niche of history as one of the greatest men the world has produced. Mr. Natarajan concurred with all that the preceding speakers had said. But Messrs. Moazzum Ali and Zahur Ahmed echoed the chagrin and disappointment felt by the Non-co-operators at this unexpected turn of events.

CHAPTER X.

THE BARDOLI DECISIONS: SUSPENSION OF CIVIL DIS- OBEDIENCE.

The Working Committee then held its sitting in camera, and adopted the resolution advocating suspension of all aggressive activities of the Congress, which Mahatmaji had placed before it. The Committee then decided to call a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee either at Bombay or at Delhi at an early date to consider the decision of the Working Committee. Thus ended the meeting that gave birth to the famous Bardoli decision. In the evening Mr. Shankerlal Banker suggested to Mahatmaji that all aggressive activities having been suspended, the people might feel that they had been left suspended in mid-air, and that there must be some programme which would harness their energies and direct them towards some constructive effort. Mahatmaji agreed and said he would think over the problem.

12th February—

The excessive strain of the last three days has greatly told upon Mahatmaji's health. Since the information about the disaster at Chauri Chaura reached him, he has not known any rest or peace, and appeared to be filled with remorse and grief. The amount of moral and mental strength required to fight against his own followers over the question of the suspension of civil disobedience, and finally to carry out his resolve against the opposition of almost all his intimate friends and supporters could better be imagined than described. This morning he drafted his famous constructive programme. Mr. Kelkar, who came to take Mahatmaji's leave before his departure by the morning train, looked very thoughtful and much depressed over the sudden and unfortunate turn of affairs. Mahatmaji was then taking his morning repast, and requested Mr. Kelkar to join and have some fruit, and tried various ways to soothe Mr. Kelkar's feelings. Finally, as Mr.

Kelkar rose to leave, Mahatmaji imploringly requested the latter not to grieve over the disaster. Then, about noon a second sitting of the Working Committee was held to consider and adopt the constructive programme framed by Mahatmaji. Pandit Malaviyaji was invited to attend this meeting of the Committee. Panditji, although not a member of the Committee made many suggestions, some of which were accepted by the Committee; but when he attempted to tone down the conditions about Charka and Khaddar, Mahatmaji got somewhat excited, and abruptly interrupted him with the remark—'Why?' and it was done in such a loud and thundering tone that Panditji was silenced.

CHAPTER XI.

A FIVE DAYS' FAST.

13th February—

Today is a Monday; Mahatmaji is observing silence. In the morning, he gave me instruction in writing that as a penance for the Chauri Chaura disaster he had commenced a five days' fast since the previous evening. For the last two days I had been asking people who generally surrounded him, not to discuss anything about fast or penance, hoping that the question might thereby receive burial. But it was, as events proved, an idle hope. Under his instruction, I sent a message to the Associated Press announcing this fast. He drafted today his famous article for *Young India*, entitled "The Crime of Chauri Chaura."

14th February—

We were busy over making up matter for this week's "Young India," the whole of the day. The All-India Congress Committee has been summoned to meet at Delhi on 24th February to consider the Bardoli decision. Mahatmaji's fast would continue till the afternoon of the 17th instant. It would be a trial for him to start for Delhi so soon after breaking the fast. I have had to keep myself away from him most of the time due to pressure of other work, although my heart yearned to nurse him during the fast. I received a little scolding from him today on account of some lapse in "Young India" work. He explained to me his own method of work, and then said—"I realise that it is not possible for you to maintain the same standard always, especially when you have to work under such pressure and amidst such confusion." From today he began to take particular care that there was not much noise or disturbance in my room.

15th February—

Today the pressure of the heavy post that arrived in the morning, made me feel somewhat distracted and puzzled.

At night Mahatmaji called me to his side, and asked me—"Krishnadas, Has there been any great increase in the amount of your work?" I at once guessed that it was Jamnalalji who had carried that information to Mahatmaji, for since his coming to Bardoli Jamnalalji had been repeatedly telling me that I had been overworking myself. However, I replied to Mahatmaji by saying that the work had no doubt increased to a certain extent, but it was not yet beyond my capacity to cope with. Then, I explained to him that I was lacking in quickness and alertness. This seemed to have touched Mahatmaji's heart, and with a wealth of affection he said—"Don't worry about that speed will come to you by and by." "Ba" (Mrs. Gandhi), Miss Anasuyaben, and Mrs. Santanam came from Ahmedabad today on receiving information about Mahatmaji's fast, and so also has come Mr. Mathradas from Bombay. There was, therefore, no lack of people to nurse him; but my grief was that I was so much occupied with my other duties that I could do nothing but make occasional enquiries about him.

16th February—

Till yesterday, although that was the third day, the effect of the fast could not be noticed in him at all; he had cheerfully spent his time in congenial talks with his friends and followers, and followed the usual daily routine of work without much difficulty or strain. But today he seems to have suddenly broken down. From early morning he spent his time in bed with closed eyes, and seemed to have lost all inclination to, or capacity for, work. At about nine in the morning, he dictated two long letters, and two notes for "Young India." He then suddenly called for me, and as I came to him, asked me—"Krishnadas, do you think there is any error in reasoning in the 'Crime of Chauri Chaura' article? His voice was full of emotion, and the eyes also seemed to be wet. It appeared to me that the whole of the morning, he had brooded over the question. Although so very weak and exhausted, he sat up on his bed at half past three and continued to write with his own hand a long article for the "Navajivan" till six o'clock in the evening. This additional strain only aggravated his

weakness and pain so much so that it was a most painful sight and we had to spend the hours of the evening helplessly and sorrowfully watching him. Finding him so much fatigued and exhausted, I solicited permission to keep up the whole night and nurse him ; but he was more solicitous about my health than his own comfort, and refused me by saying that he would presently fall to sleep, and that no attendance or watching would be necessary.

17th February—

Today is the last day of the fast. The exhaustion and prostration from which he had suffered yesterday was still there, and he lay down in bed the whole of the morning with eyes closed. Then, about noon, he got up and took his bath, which seemed to have refreshed him a little ; for after the bath he could read the day's papers, and dictate a few letters and an article for "Young India." Although I was otherwise busy the whole day, I was careful that he should break his fast at the appointed time. And so punctually at 5 in the afternoon, I appeared before him with a small quantity of milk, a few grapes and a cup of orange juice. He then summoned Mathradas to his side, and asked him to read the twelfth chapter of the Gita, himself sitting up on his bed with closed eyes and clasped hands, and hearing the recitation with great devotion and attention. A few tear drops escaped his eyes at the time. What is it that Chauri Chaura has done, that he the very embodiment of self-restraint should today thus lose his balance? Babu Rajendra Prasad, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, Miss Anasuyaben and others came and sat near his presence when he began to partake his repast.

CHAPTER XII.

MEETING WITH MAULANA MAHOMED ALI IN CONVICT DRESS : A PATHETIC INCIDENT.

18th February—

I must record a special incident which happened today. Maulana Mahomed Ali and Dr. Kitchlew, who had been imprisoned at Karachi, were taken this morning to Bijapur and Dhulia jails respectively. The morning train from Surat reaches Bardoli at 10 A.M. A little before that hour, a telegram was received at our camp intimating that the two illustrious prisoners were being carried by that train under a strong escort of police. As soon as the information was received all those who were present at the camp ran towards the station to have a sight of their imprisoned leaders. Mahatmaji had broken his fast only the previous day, and was so weak that it was impossible for him to think of going to the station. I had, therefore, intended to stay behind to look after him ; but Seth Jamnalal came in the meantime and suggested that I should carry a few oranges for the honoured 'convicts.' Thereupon, I prepared a small parcel of oranges and hurried to the station. Maulana Mahomed Ali observing me from his place in the guarded compartment greeted me with a shout—'How is Bengal doing?' He loved to call me by the name of my Province, Bengal. The effect of the imprisonment was visible on his countenance which had become swarthy and emaciated, but the fountain of joy and natural simplicity which perpetually bubbled up had remained unimpaired. Both the Maulana and Dr. Kitchlew in their convict dress appeared to be like two caged and untamed lions. They were insistent that they must see Mahatmaji before leaving Bardoli. The train was, therefore, detained for a while, and Dayalji-bhai ran post-haste, and engaged a horse-carriage to bring Mahatmaji quickly to the station. Mahatmaji arrived. He walked the platform with slow and tired steps, leaning on the staff in his hand. The sight that ensued when he

approached the compartment occupied by the Maulana and the Doctor, is beyond my power to describe. In the exuberance of their feelings they had wholly lost their balance. They stretched out their hands to touch Mahatmaji's person, and when he had advanced sufficiently near, they overwhelmed him with a flood of kisses, uttering 'Bapuji, Bapuji' all the while. That eager abandonment, that restless yearning to lose themselves in the object of their love and adoration, how could I do justice to it? Maulana Mahomed Ali, when he partially remained self-control, said, 'It was Bapu alone who was capable of writing an article of the standard of "The Crime of Chauri Chaura"; there was no one else in the whole world who could write such a candid article. Then, he said, 'It was quite in the fitness of things that civil disobedience at Bardoli had been suspended after the Chauri Chaura affair.' The train started two or three minutes after Mahatmaji's arrival. As it was moving out of the platform, Maulana Mahomed Ali stretching out his neck began to shout, "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jay, Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jay," in a soft, emotional voice, the music of which lingered in the air even when the train had got out of sight. Those who witnessed the flow of love, affection and emotion, when Mahatmaji met those two of his most prominent co-workers and lieutenants, then imprisoned, were equally overpowered with feeling, and some of the people present could not restrain their tears at the time.

CHAPTER XIII.

BARDOLI NOT AT FAULT.

The abrupt suspension of civil disobedience caused some disappointment and depression to the people of Bardoli. Mahatmaji, therefore, addressed to them an open letter in Gujarati, an English translation of which is given below :—

“To

The People of Bardoli,”

“You have really done your best ; it was not for your fault that civil disobedience has been suspended, but for the fault of Gorakhpur. We all belong to one single country, which is India ; therefore, the grievous lapse of Gorakhpur has affected us also.

“For a true soldier, it is all the same whether to fight or not to fight. When the order comes—‘March,—he goes to fight ; and when the order comes—‘Halt,’—he halts. The Working Committee has now advised us to halt ; therefore, in order to prove that Bardoli is permeated through and through with the spirit of a true soldier, all of you should pay up your taxes as soon as possible.

“One can suspend civil disobedience, but Satyagraha can never be suspended. Satyagraha should be the breath of our life. Therefore, we should respect the decision of the Working Committee arrived at after a good deal of deliberation for the sake of preserving Truth and as a mark of devotion to Truth.

“Although the people of Bardoli were anxious to start civil disobedience, it cannot be denied that they had many deficiencies and shortcomings. I now earnestly hope that they will strive their utmost to remove those shortcomings and increase their fitness for civil disobedience.

“During my stay here I have learnt that the condition of the Kaliparaj (dark-complexioned) community throughout the Taluka is no better than that of slaves. It is the duty of the higher or the bright-complexioned classes

to remove the ignorance of the former and uplift them. This alone will prove that they (the higher classes) really deserve their present higher status, or that they are endowed with real brightness. The Charka should be spread broadcast among the Kaliparaj; and they should be persuaded to send their children to our national schools for their education.

"I strongly desire that the people of Bardoli should achieve their fitness for civil disobedience by fulfilling entirely the conditions laid down by the Congress.

"The Kaliparaj are addicted to drink. Our workers should visit their homes and try to wean them from that bad habit by loving and affectionate treatment, and by supplying them with milk, butter-milk or any other cold and soothing drink as a substitute.

"You can establish from today your Panchayets for the settlement of all your internal quarrels. You can make the best possible arrangement for the training and development of the boys who come to attend your schools. You can achieve your economic freedom by the adoption of the Charka in every home, and by training a body of weavers and carders in every village. You can run all your Panchayet courts, your national schools, your anti-drink campaign and propaganda work for the spread of Khaddar out of the proceeds from the sale of Khaddar. if you can make the Taluka self-contained in regard to its cloth requirements.

"The Congress has pointed out all this activity to you. Every man and woman should be a member of the Congress—this is, in fact, your first duty. Then, you should all contribute to the Swaraj fund a hundredth part of your last year's income. That is the second duty.

"You will have achieved the substance of freedom if you can follow this line of work; and you will also be regarded as having thoroughly qualified yourself for civil disobedience if you can complete this programme of work methodically and in an organised manner.

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI."

CHAPTER XIV.

ATTACK ON MAHATMAJI FROM ALL SIDES FOR BARDOLI DECISIONS.

On the 22nd February Mahatmaji started for Delhi to attend the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee summoned specially to consider the resolution of the Working Committee suspending civil disobedience at Bardoli. Mrs. C. R. Das had pressed Mahatmaji to change the venue of the meeting to Calcutta, but it was not possible to do so especially when an announcement had once been made in favour of Delhi. Mahatmaji, therefore, offered himself to go to Calcutta after the All-India Congress Committee meeting, if Mrs. Das desired it. Dr. Mahmud of Behar, who had been to Calcutta, sent a wire from Patna informing Mahatmaji that the leaders of Bengal were very much displeased with the Bardoli decision, and that they were even contemplating open defiance of that decision. Some flutter was observable among the Maharashtra leaders also. Mr. Zahur Ahmed informed Mahatmaji by a telegram from Bombay that a strong current of agitation was rising against that decision even in Bombay, which was considered to be Mahatmaji's stronghold. Mahatmaji sent the following reply to Mr. Zahur Ahmed:—

"Thanks wire. Misrepresentation inevitable. But God with us. Let us derive strength from Him rather than from public support."—Gandhi.

Letters began to pour in from all parts of the country criticising and blaming Mahatmaji for the sudden suspension of the aggressive side of the non-co-operation programme. The volume of that opposition produced some nervousness among his immediate followers and associates; but he himself remained quite unmoved and unaffected, and, in fact, he ignored those protests altogether. A class of people began to take this opportunity to undermine his influence in the country. Some of them pointed out that Mahatmaji was not, properly speaking, a votary of Swaraj (Indian self-rule), his primary objective being to preach the doctrine of non-violence, even at the cost of India. But the real fact was that from their experience of the West they could not persuade themselves to believe

that it was possible to achieve Swaraj by non-violent means as advocated by Mahatmaji. They also failed to realise that a Swaraj established by brute-force could hardly be expected to safeguard the interest and freedom of the weak, oppressed and down-trodden masses of India. Some of them, again, quoted the sayings of Buddha, and showed that there was sanction for war even in the high and noble teachings of that mighty High-Priest of Ahimsa. The fact was that they could not conceive that a war could be relentlessly waged not by killing the adversary, but by submitting to be killed by him; that it was possible to engage in a righteous battle without being violent to the enemy but by suffering all sorts of oppression at the latter's hands; and that the courage demanded by a fight of this character was superior to that possessed by those who engaged in a violent warfare. Buddha's main and central teaching was that anger and hatred was to be conquered by non-anger and non-hatred; and he gave a secondary sanction to professional warriors, who were bound to obey their masters, to fight without hatred or anger. This did not mean that fighting was advocated or sanctioned by Buddha as a part of the religion which he preached. Some of the advocates of violence also quoted the Hindu scriptures to prove that violence was sanctioned by Hinduism. In their desire to lower Mahatmaji in public estimation, they became very loud in their professions of religion, without, in fact, knowing or understanding what constituted the essence of religion, whether Hindu, Buddhist, or other. Mahatmaji's noble teaching* that it was possible to conduct a great non-violent political agitation with no other weapon than spiritual strength, courage, patience, endurance and devotion to Truth, and without any hatred for the adversary, made no appeal to these minds. This furious opposition to the Bardoli decision seemed to make it increasingly clear that there was going to be a serious split in the non-co-operation camp, and that it would be difficult for those who had no conscientious objection to violence as a political weapon to continue remaining under the banner of Mahatma Gandhi for any further length of time.

CHAPTER XV.

A VERITABLE ORDEAL OF FIRE FOR MAHATMAJI.

This time Mahatmaji had to pass through a veritable ordeal of fire at Delhi. It had been apparent for some time that those who had no faith in the policy of non-violence, or were generally speaking opposed to the programme of non-co-operation, would try their best to remove that policy and programme from their place of predominance in Congress politics, and re-establish in their place the old, hackneyed method of agitation whose futility had long been exposed by the political experiences of India as well as of other countries. Immediately after the Bardoli decision, Swami Sradddhanand raised this cry of revolt by saying that it was not possible during a period of political turmoil to keep the peace throughout a vast country like India and create an atmosphere favourable to civil disobedience, as advocated by Mahatmaji, and that therefore the Congress should abandon its policy of non-co-operation, and raise the boycott against the Councils. The Non-co-operators, however, were not prepared at that stage to go the whole length with Swami Shaddhananda; but they got very much depressed and demoralised, and blamed Mahatmaji for bringing about a catastrophe in the affairs of the nation by a sudden and hasty change in the programme of work. On his arrival at Delhi, Mahatmaji found that even those whom he regarded as pillars of the movement had ranged themselves against the decision arrived at Bardoli. This convinced him that the ideal upon which the fabric of his conception of Satyagraha was founded had not found proper and adequate recognition in the country. The Bardoli decision had not properly speaking abandoned any vital part of the programme of non-co-operation, nor had it suspended civil disobedience for all time. What it proposed was a halt,—a temporary cessation of all kinds of aggressive activities in order to bring under check the unwholesome excitement that had been dragging the country towards violence.

The workers, in fact, had not realised that a disobedience which had its root in excitement, arrogance, anger and retaliation was no *civil* or peaceful disobedience. It was no Satyagraha in fact. Mahatmaji, therefore, found himself in the most difficult and uncomfortable position of being pitted against his dearest co-workers and associates. But he showed that his attachment for the ideal was greater than that for his party, and that he had the strength to stand forth in a minority of one; and, if necessary, even to give battle to his party, for the sake of maintaining the ideal intact.

Leaving Bardoli on 22nd February, Mahatmaji reached Delhi on the 23rd, and, as on the previous occasion, stayed with Dr. Ansari at Dariyaganj. On his arrival here, he received many letters from his friends and associates, who had been undergoing various terms of imprisonment in the gaols of Delhi, Lucknow, Agra, and other places. All of them, without exception, opposed the Bardoli resolution, and very strongly criticised it. Was it merely for the propagation of the spinning-wheel idea that Mahatmaji had dragged so many well-known leaders of the country and thousands of educated young men to gaol? — asked an indignant correspondent. Another thought that a religious preacher like Mahatmaji should never have come to meddle with politics, and it was the height of folly on the part of the Indian people to accept such a personality as their political leader. There were, again, others who said Mahatmaji had given a decent burial to the non-co-operation movement by one single act of political short-sightedness, destroying a huge mass movement in the twinkling of an eye. They had lost all enthusiasm to work in connection with the movement, and considered all their sacrifices and efforts had gone in vain. And, lastly, an intimate friend and co-worker warned Mahatmaji that he would not at all be surprised or sorry, if the vast body of workers rose in revolt against the Bardoli decision and removed Mahatmaji from his position of leadership. He would take it as natural and justifiable for them, although personally he was prepared to accept as final whatever decision Mahatmaji might ultimately reach in the matter.

At night when it was past ten, the representatives of Bengal came to see Mahatmaji. The excitement, disappointment, and consequent spirit of revolt was said to have been most pronounced among the Bengal delegates. As soon as we reached Dr. Ansari's residence, a Delhi friend jokingly remarked to me that the Bengal people would come and break our heads with their *lathis*. But after discussion with Mahatmaji on the matter, it appeared to me that most of them had calmed down, and the views of some among them had changed completely. The discussion also made it apparent that the leaders of Bengal held that the conditions of Charka and Khaddar that Mahatmaji had imposed upon the people to qualify for civil disobedience was unnecessary or superfluous. They repeatedly brought to Mahatmaji's notice that even without waiting for the spread of Charka and Khaddar, only recently they had scored a victory over Government in the matter of the Midnapur Union Board by civil disobedience on a mass scale in the matter of non-payment of a cess. They little realised that this action on their part was opposed to Mahatmaji's strategy that there should be no civil disobedience of an aggressive nature anywhere else in India, when he was engaged in a struggle of that kind at Bardoli. It also did not occur to them that in a war, whether violent or non-violent, the orders of the General in command must be scrupulously obeyed, if a defeat was to be avoided, or if the war was to be brought to a successful conclusion. In the course of this discussion Mahatmaji plainly told the Bengal leaders that he would not yield an inch of ground so far as the fundamental position was concerned, that he was prepared to be thrown into a minority of one, and was confident that he would ultimately conquer public opinion. He further said—"The issue before the country is whether you will have undiluted non-violence, or non-violence diluted with violence." He then referred to the letters received by him from Messrs. George Joseph and Mahadev Desai from the Agra Jail, and said he would place those letters before the All-India Congress Committee, and ask the members to make their final choice of programme. He did not desire, he said, to make any compromise on the fundamental issue of non-violence.

The representatives of Bengal departed at 12 midnight. Then, came a messenger with a very long letter from a distinguished Indian leader, who was also in gaol at the time, and who was equally with the others disgusted with Mahatmaji on account of the Bardoli decision, and criticised the latter in terms of bitter reproach. Mahatmaji kept reading that letter far into the night, even after we had retired.

CHAPTER XVI.

WORKING COMMITTEE RECONSIDERS SUSPENSION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.

The principal workers of the Congress assembled at Delhi for the All-India Congress Committee meeting on 24th February (1922) from the different provinces of India. A meeting of the Working Committee was held in the morning to consider the proposals embodied in the Bardoli resolution, and was attended on invitation by representatives of the provinces. The President of the Working Committee, Hakim Ajmal Khan Sahab, had in the meantime received an important communication from another leader of all-India repute, who also criticised the Bardoli decision as sounding the death-knell of non-co-operation. The proceedings of the Working Committee meeting referred to above commenced with the reading by Mahatmaji of these several communications received from Non-co-operators then in the different gaols of India. Generally speaking these letters found no fault with the suspension of mass civil disobedience, but they were without exception bitterly opposed to the other clauses of the Bardoli resolution. When the reading of the letters was finished, Mahatmaji summarily rejected them with the remark that it was no business of those who were undergoing imprisonment to express their opinion on things happening outside, and that similarly it was no part of the duty of those who were outside to pay any heed to those opinions.

Then, Mahatmaji continued that he had chalked out his programme on the basis of this fundamental idea that in the political condition in which India was situated, it was not possible for her to attain Swaraj except through non-violent means. He could not therefore support the view of those who without any conviction about non-violence had been following the programme of non-co-operation by giving only their vocal assent to the pledge of non-violence, while all the time working for a violent

revolution in India under cover of non-violence. If after a full and fair discussion of the subject, the Congress adopted a programme based on the theory of violence, he would welcome it. It would be, indeed, a source of happiness to him if he was defeated at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee on the definite issue of non-violence *versus* violence. For he would then be able to follow his own non-violent activities with a band of small, but select and sincere body of workers, untrammelled by any artificial majority, such as that dogged him at every step. Now, on account of this unmanageable majority, and also his want of confidence in the men he was leading, he had to measure every step, lest he should be led away from the path of non-violence. But when he would get a compact following although small in numbers, he would be able to work without any worry or fear. He said that his experience in South Africa had taught him that he could work better and show greater results when he had only a small, but determined body of men and women under him. If, therefore, the members of the All-India Congress Committee did not want this programme of non-violence, he would gladly and willingly step aside from his present position of leadership. Mahatmaji uttered these words with such deliberation and cool composure, weighing every word as he uttered it, that they produced an immediate effect upon the audience.

Finding him prepared to renounce his leadership most of the members present got alarmed; and what was more, even Swami Shraddhanand, who, as I have said, was the first to raise the standard of revolt, expressed the opinion that it was not possible at that stage to do any political work in India without the support or guidance of Mahatmaji. A well-known Parsi politician, who had shown violent hostility to the Bardoli decision ever since it had been promulgated, now suddenly altered his attitude, and in a quite submissive tone said—"Mahatmaji, you are morally bound to lead us. You cannot leave us at this juncture, nor can we afford to spare you." And other leaders and workers also with a united voice admitted the necessity of the continuance of Mahatmaji's leadership, and said that in no case could they allow him to leave them.

Then, Hakim Ajmal Khan Sahab wanted to know from

the members what effect the Bardoli decision had produced upon the country in general, and what changes in the Bardoli resolution would conciliate the workers. In reply to the query several of the representatives got up one after another to narrate their experiences, the general tenour of which was that the decision had considerably damped the ardour and enthusiasm of the people throughout the country. But they all held that they could not discard Mahatmaji's guidance, so far as mass civil disobedience was concerned, and that they would be satisfied if only the right of defensive civil disobedience and of picketing foreign cloth were restored to them. The suggestion was also put forward by some that the Government might be disobeyed in respect of the Punitive Police Tax, wherever such tax had been imposed upon the people.

This meeting of consultation with provincial representatives held by the Working Committee continued till about 11 A.M. The discussion at this meeting did not appear to have given any relief to Mahatmaji; for it showed that the representatives of the Congress assembled at that meeting clung to him not out of any love for the principles of non-violence or Satyagraha, for which he lived and worked, but only as a mark of personal homage to him, or for fear of losing his leadership, which they valued. Mahatmaji, however, had already guessed the mentality of those who were opposing the Bardoli decision, and what would satisfy the Non-co-operators generally under the situation. He had on his way from Bardoli to Delhi, prepared a draft resolution restoring the very rights for which the representatives pressed in the course of their discussion with members of the Working Committee, namely, the right of defensive civil disobedience and the right of picketing foreign cloth. This draft Mahatmaji placed before a second sitting of the Working Committee held in his room at two in the afternoon, and the Committee having adopted it, it was decided to place this resolution before the All-India Congress Committee as the main resolution on behalf of the Working Committee.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ALL-INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE MEETS : BARDOLI RESOLUTION CONSIDERED.

Then, the session of the All-India Congress Committee met at the residence of Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb at 7 in the evening. There were three proposals placed before the Committee for its consideration and decision, namely, (1) Dr. Moonje's vote of censure on Mahatmaji ; (2) Bardoli resolution without any alteration ; and (3) the Bardoli resolution with changes suggested by the Working Committee after discussion with the provincial representatives. Personally speaking, Mahatmaji was in favour of the acceptance of the second proposition, *viz.*, the Bardoli resolution without any alteration. Nevertheless, he accepted the third proposal out of consideration for feelings of friends, and also because he realised that if he had done otherwise, it would have meant some coercion to public opinion. I describe below the incidents of the occasion from notes which I made at the time.

24th February—

The All-India Congress Committee was to have met at 2 P.M. in Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb's residence, but it had to be postponed till 7 P.M. because the Working Committee had not finished its deliberations and was not ready with its resolution. The session, however, commenced punctually at 7 P.M. Before the proceedings began, some members raised an objection to the presence of Press reporters at the meeting. Dr. Moonje, then, got up and said in his usual style that they had arrived at a situation involving matters of life and death to the nation. It behoved them to speak out their minds without any reservation, and it was not desirable that any outsider should come to know what transpired at the meeting. The President, Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb, wanted to know the sense of the House ; but before the matter was put to the vote, the Reporters voluntarily withdrew from the

meeting. From such a rough and combative beginning, one could guess that the proceedings of the night would be sufficiently serious and lively:

Then, Mahatmaji moved the resolution of the Working Committee. He said that there was an impression abroad that he had framed the resolutions of Bardoli under Pandit Malaviya's inspiration, which was absolutely untrue. As soon as he had read about the terrible incident at Chauri Chaura, he had realised the grave situation it had created, and had independently, and before he had met Panditji, arrived at the decision, which the resolutions adopted at Bardoli represented. He had not abandoned any part of the original programme of non-co-operation because of the Bardoli resolutions; only there has been some retreat by way of suspension of aggressive activities. In his opinion it was a mere strategic retreat, and had become necessary if only to maintain the non-violent character of the movement. He was prepared to renounce his leadership, if the All-India Congress Committee decided to change the present programme, which was one of non-violence. He requested the House to ponder seriously whether they should continue to follow him as its leader. For if they worked with him he did not know what other and greater occasions of insult and suffering they might not have to face in future. He would warn them that whenever he would discover that the people were in the wrong in any matter, he would not hesitate to proclaim the same publicly. He was, he said, incorrigible in that respect. If they chose to follow his leadership it might be, whenever the circumstances demanded it, they should have to beat a retreat even when they were in sight of the desired goal. In his opinion, the present condition of the country required that the original Bardoli resolution should be adhered to without any alteration, because he felt that at that juncture nothing was more important for the country than the preservation of an atmosphere of peace and non-violence. But although such was his conviction, he did not want to suppress the independence of opinion of the majority of members. He had, therefore, yielded his ground on one or two points, as was apparent from the resolution he had just moved before the House. But Mahatmaji solemnly warned the

members that although the proposed resolution had restored to the Provincial Congress Committees the right of picketing, they must be very cautious in the exercise of that right. He narrated a few instances to explain how picketing was being generally carried out, and said that picketing of that sort was also a form of violence.

Mr. V. J. Patel supported the proposal moved by Mahatmaji. He said that the present resolution restored to the Provincial Congress Committees practically all their powers, except that of mass civil disobedience. The strategy of mass civil disobedience with all its attendant dangers, said Mr. Patel, was known only to Mahatmaji; he was the only General who could conduct a campaign of that character; and, in his opinion, it was unreasonable that any one else should claim the power even for starting mass civil disobedience.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TWO CENSURE RESOLUTIONS ON MAHATMAJI.

At this point Dr. Moonje stood up and said that if the present resolution was passed by the House, it would not be possible for it to consider the motion for censure, which stood in his name. It had been the established practice to take up for consideration, in the first instance, the resolutions framed by the Working Committee. But Mahatmaji realised that Dr. Moonje would be placed tactically at a disadvantage if the practice was adhered to on the present occasion. As soon, therefore, as Dr. Moonje pointed out the difficulty of his position, Mahatmaji withdrew the resolution of the Working Committee which he had moved, and gave Dr. Moonje opportunity to place his proposal before the House.

Dr. Moonje's proposal was that a Committee of Enquiry should be appointed to report upon the injuries inflicted upon the country by the policy and programme of non-co-operation as it was being pursued by the Congress. In the opinion of the Doctor, since the inauguration of this programme, the leaders had been playing ducks and drakes with the honour and prestige of the country, and the Bardoli resolution had brought them to the lowest depth of degradation. He said the country should not tolerate such insults heaped upon it by its own representatives. He, therefore, strongly urged upon the House to take up the question of maintaining its own honour irrespective of any consideration as to the personality of the instrument responsible for lowering its position in the eyes of the world. Swami Satyadeva, Mr. Abhyankar, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, and several other well-known representatives lent their support to Dr. Moonje's proposal, and raised a chorus of bitter and pungent criticism against Mahatmaji's method of work. They would demand a clear definition of non-violence; they demanded to know the exact line of demarcation between non-violence and violence. They must be clear as to where non-violence ended, and when violence

began. The storm continued to blow furiously for some time, when the President Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb, being a little indisposed, left the charge of the meeting to Mahatmaji's hands, and retired.

As soon as he occupied the presidential seat, Mahatmaji seemed to have worked a miracle; for the course of discussion took a different turn almost in the twinkling of an eye. The atmosphere of the meeting had become highly tense and somewhat poisonous due to the violence of the attack, and had gathered volume and force from the opposition to it from some of Mahatmaji's supporters. Mahatmaji, however, from his presidential chair laid down the golden rule that none but the supporters of Dr. Moonje's proposition would be heard. And so I noticed that if any of his supporters unable to restrain himself under the lash of criticism of the other side would get up to give a reply, Mahatmaji would signal him to sit down and keep his peace. I was not aware whether in the whole course of its previous career, the All-India Congress Committee had witnessed any such occasion as the present when an overwhelming majority quietly and patiently submitted, without retort, and without opposition, to a regular fusillade of angry and bitter criticism by a minority, which although consisting of important members, was nevertheless insignificant from the point of view of numbers. It was an object-lesson in tolerance, patience, humility as well as love and respectful consideration for the feelings of the adversary which Mahatmaji gave on this occasion. It was also a practical demonstration as to how a majority should treat with a minority if the internal peace of a country or a community had to be preserved. The result was that a wonderful change of spirit soon came over the whole House. The vehement anger and reproachful bitterness evinced by the critics began to cool down for want of any fuel to keep up the flame. And at last the anti-climax was reached when Dr. Moonje got up and explained with a good deal of mildness and persuasive eloquence that he was anxious to hear the arguments on Mahatmaji's side, for if he felt convinced that his proposition was fallacious he would withdraw it. But Mahatmaji refused to defend himself. The proposition was then put to the vote, and was thrown out by an over-

whelming majority. After the rejection of Dr. Moonje's proposal, Mr. J. N. Sen-Gupta of Calcutta brought forward a proposal of his own, which, though identical in character, was somewhat modified in form. During the discussion on this proposal, Mahatma adopted the same course of neither defending himself, nor allowing others to defend him. Mr. Gupta's proposal was similarly negatived by the Committee with as clear a majority as Dr. Moonje's motion.

Thus ended the proceedings of the first sitting of the Committee. Mahatma, indeed, gained a victory, so far as the counting of votes was concerned; but he was not satisfied with the result of the meeting. He had noticed that a large number of members had been voting for him without any conviction about the need for non-violence, or about Satyagraha. When the fury of the discussion was raging at the meeting, a well-known member came and whispered in my ears—"We must all vote for Mahatma, because we have no other leader who can unite the whole country." This was, indeed, true so far as it went; but according to Mahatma himself, such personal homage rendered to him worked more as a hindrance than as a help towards the recognition of the ideals and programme for which he had been working. He passed the whole night without any sleep, and tossed about in his bed in a state of restless agitation. Finding us somewhat alarmed on his account in the morning, he only heaved a deep sigh, and in a voice choked with emotion exclaimed—"What am I to do? I do not clearly see my way."

CHAPTER XIX.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF BARDOLI RESOLUTION.

The Committee sat again on the 25th, when the Bardoli resolution was placed before it for careful analysis and examination. This afforded a fresh opportunity to Mahatmaji's opponents, especially those belonging to the Maharashtra Party, to renew their volley of criticisms and censure against non-violence, Truth, Khaddar, and other fundamental principles governing Mahatmaji's political activities. In that resolution Mahatmaji had described the Chauri Chaura incident as a warning of God, which provoked a member to deliver a long harangue against the introduction of God's name in political work, and he began to expatiate on the rationale and beauties of Atheism. In a particular part of the resolution, Mahatmaji had annotated the word 'non-violence' with the word 'peace,' and the word 'truth' with 'legitimateness,' in order to shew that the creed of the Congress, namely, the attainment of Swaraj through "peaceful and legitimate means," meant the observance of "non-violence" and "Truth." But the same member got up to protest against the insertion of those explanatory words, and in the course of his argument began to expose the hollowness of arguments based on Truth and non-violence. As soon as Mahatmaji found the member exercising his valorous tongue in a criticism of the sacred ideals on which Mahatmaji's whole life was based, he made haste to expunge them from the resolution, and informed the member that the words objected to had been withdrawn. This, however, involved no small strain on Mahatmaji's nature. Returning to his residence after the meeting, Mahatmaji asked me about the antecedents of the member, and expressed deep and intense anguish at the attitude taken up by him.

When the examination of the Bardoli resolution was over, some members under the leadership of Mr. Shri Prakasa of Benares approached Mahatmaji with the request that since in his opinion the best interests of the country de-

manded the adoption of the Bardoli resolution without the alterations suggested by the Working Committee; and since further, in his opinion, the Bardoli proposals safeguarded the interests of non-violence better, the same might be put to the vote of the Committee. The request came as a ray of comfort to Mahatmaji, and he felt supremely gratified. He, therefore, put the proposal to the vote of the House, which adopted it by a vast majority. At this stage Dr. Ansari got up and delivered a speech criticising the last decision of the Committee and described it as a most unfortunate decision. For, by that decision, he believed that the Committee had put its signature to the doom of the present national movement, and also of other national activities in India for some time to come. The pathos and grief which the speech revealed exposed to Mahatmaji's view the real state of feelings of the country's best and trusted leaders. As soon, therefore, as the speech was over, Mahatmaji made a short statement in which he explained that he had no idea that the opposition to the Bardoli proposals was so very strong even amongst those whom he regarded as the true custodians of the country's interests. He did not want to carry the proposition in the teeth of opposition of those without whose co-operation he could not hope to carry on work in the country. He, therefore, with the permission of the House, withdrew his previous motion, and invited the members to vote upon the amended resolution placed before them by the Working Committee restoring the rights of individual civil disobedience and picketing to the Provincial Congress Committees. This was also adopted by an equally large majority, and the meeting dispersed at about 9 P. M. Mahatmaji had then a long private conversation with Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb extending over two hours, after which he retired to his residence.

CHAPTER XX.

WORKING COMMITTEE MEETS: FOREIGN PROPAGANDA RESOLUTION.

The next day (26th February) there was again a sitting of the Working Committee. At this meeting some difference of opinion was observed among the leaders on the subject of Foreign Propaganda. Mahatmaji was not in favour of such propaganda, for he held that the attention of the outside world would be drawn towards India not so much by way of propaganda as by the genuine strength, intensity and volume of the national movement in India. He explained that propaganda in foreign countries when the internal strength of the country was undeveloped would fall on deaf ears, and would be regarded as artificial and interested. On the other hand, if the national movement was strong in India, that is, if India could prove by her sacrifice and suffering that she was thoroughly in earnest about the realisation of her national demands, the foreigners would be themselves interested to know about her. As an illustration Mahatmaji pointed out that since the inauguration of the non-co-operation movement the Congress had suspended activities in foreign countries, and yet India today was more before the eyes of the world than she had been at any time in the whole course of her previous political career. Some members of the Committee, however, remained unconvinced, and they were insistent that the Working Committee should adopt their recommendation. They also pressed upon Mahatmaji to take charge of organising a Propaganda Department, and sanctioned some money for the purpose. Seth Jammalal Bajaj made another suggestion to the effect that the Congress should create portfolios and set up departments for carrying on the different items of the new constructive programme. Mahatmaji liked the proposal and requested Sethji to be prepared to take charge of the Khaddar Department, and asked Dr. Pattabhi, who was present at the meeting as a visitor, to put himself

in readiness to take up the duties of Director of National Education throughout India. In reply to a query Mahatmaji said that one should not necessarily be a member of the Working Committee to be in charge of a department of the constructive programme.

After the termination of the Working Committee meeting, the general body of members of the All-India Congress Committee came to Mahatmaji to take their farewell before departure to their respective destinations. They seemed to be generally satisfied with the decision arrived at by the All-India Congress Committee, and to have to a certain extent got over their depression and despair. While bidding them farewell Mahatmaji requested them not to use the power of individual civil disobedience and picketing, which the All-India Congress Committee had restored to them, and they all seemed heartily to agree to do this.

At about 9 in the evening, a rumour reached us that the Executive Council of the Viceroy, Lord Reading, had finally decided to arrest Mahatmaji at an early date. It was said that if the All-India Congress Committee had not countenanced individual civil disobedience and had stuck to the original Bardoli decision, the arrest could have been avoided. This news of his approaching arrest made Mahatmaji cheerful and gay beyond measure. The 29th of February was a Monday, which he spent in silence at Delhi; and then, on the 28th morning, we left Delhi for the Ashram at Sabarmati.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAHATMAJI'S ANXIETY TO CUT DOWN THE NUMBERS OF HIS PARTY.

This meeting of the All-India Congress Committee unmistakably showed that the differences of opinion and ideal prevailing among those who formed the non-co-operation party would be prominently brought out before the public at no distant date, and that those who were regarded as friends of the movement might in course of time turn into its opponents. It was at Delhi that Mahatmaji realised to the full that people without any deep conviction about the foundations of his whole movement had come to swell the numbers. He found also that a wing of the All-India Congress Committee contained a determined band of politicians, who although opposed to the principle of non-co-operation, had sailed with the current with a view to undermine the movement as soon as an opportunity appeared before them. He, therefore, began to plead in the columns of "Young India" that in the higher interests of the country itself such people should separate themselves and form a party of their own, as opposed to the party of non-co-operation. Thus wrote Mahatmaji,—

"Let those who do not believe in non-violence, or believe in both violence and non-violence running together, form a party of their own and fight out the issue. That would make a Non-co-operator's task difficult, but not so difficult as when he has to fight an enemy in his own camp. His system must be kept pure. Any impurity from within can ever prove fatal. The first, and indeed the only condition of success, therefore, is that we must be true to ourselves" (*Young India*, February 9, 1922).

Again, "I do say that if Congressmen do not fully believe in the policy (of non-violence) they are doing an injury to the country by pretending to follow it. If violence is to be the basis of the future Government, the

Councillors are undoubtedly the wisest.' For it is through the Councils that by the same devices by which the present administrators rule us, the Councillors hope to seize power from the former's hand. I have little doubt that those who nurse violence in their bosoms will find no benefit from the lip-profession of non-violence. I urge, therefore, with all the vehemence at my command that those who do not believe in non-violence should secede from the Congress and from non-co-operation, and prepare to seek election or rejoin law-courts or Government Colleges, as the case may be. Let there be no manner of doubt that Swaraj established by non-violent means will be different in kind from the Swaraj that can be established by armed rebellion." (*Young India*, March 2, 1922).

And, further,—“Is it not national economy to let all the ideals be sharply defined, and to work independently of one another? Then that which is most popular will win the day.” And, again,—

“Is it not right and patriotic for them to form a new party and a new organisation? They will then truly educate the country. Those who do not believe in the creed should surely retire from the Congress. Even a national organisation must have a creed. One, for instance, who does not believe in Swaraj has no place in the Congress. I submit that even so one who does not believe in ‘peaceful and legitimate means’ has no place in the Congress. A Congressman may not believe in non-co-operation and still remain in it; but he cannot believe in violence and untruth, and still be a Congressman.” (*Young India*, March 2, 1922).

Finally, Mahatmaji appealed to those members of the All-India Congress Committee who had not given up their legal profession, or had not adopted hand-spun and hand-woven Khaddar as their wear, to leave the Committee, because they could neither follow nor help forward the programme of non-co-operation, which the Committee as the executive of the Congress was pledged to carry out. Thus, we find him writing,—

“A practising lawyer may become a Congressman, but he cannot be called a Non-co-operator. He cannot

and should not, therefore, be on the All-India Congress Committee. Similarly, one who does not wear hand-spun and hand-woven Khaddar, or a title-holder, or a Councillor, may not be called Non-co-operators, though all these may be Congressmen.”

CHAPTER XXII.

MAHATMAJI'S ANGUISH AND MORTIFICATION.

While leaving Delhi Mahatmaji planned to stay at the Ashram only for a day or two, and then to go to Bardoli to engage himself in the work of developing that Taluka into an ideal centre of rural work on the lines set forth in the new constructive programme. It was also decided that the next sitting of the Working Committee would be held at Lucknow, and there was a talk that he should in that connection take up another tour to various important cities of Northern India to assure the general mass of people that the policy of non-co-operation had not been abandoned by the Bardoli decision, and also to propagate the message of non-violence with greater insistence. While at Delhi Mahatmaji heard from the lips of a representative coming from Assam how the Government had established a veritable reign of terror in that province. The young representative who came to report about the woes of Assam said that he was the only solitary Congressman in the whole Province who had been left out of prison, and that had he not come to Delhi to attend the All-India Congress Committee meeting, he would have perhaps found himself in gaol by that time. He said the Government was taking forcible possession of the Congress offices, and national volunteers were being brutally assaulted and ill-treated. He appealed to the leaders to come to Assam, as there was not a single man of importance left in the Province to whom the people could look up for lead and guidance. Mahatmaji was considerably moved by this distressing report about Assam brought about by the reign of lawless repression established by Government and desired that he should pay a flying visit to Gauhati to encourage the workers and assure them of his moral sympathy and support. And in that case he thought he should also attend the Bengal Provincial Conference which was about to hold its session of the year at Chittagong.

When the decision of the All-India Congress Committee at Delhi was widely known throughout the country, it appeared as if the flood of excitement prevailing on all sides received a sudden and abrupt check. It was like a lull after a tremendous and devastating storm. Mahatmaji seemed at the time to be always suffering from deep anguish and mortification. In his private conversations he used to say that God had really saved him by ordaining the Chauri Chaura disaster just at the opportune moment; for unless it had occurred he would have begun the civil disobedience at Bardoli, with the result that similar disobedience would have been started on all sides in complete disregard of his instructions and in defiance of the resolutions of the Congress, and the whole country would have been engulfed by anarchy and chaos. His misery at the failure of the people to understand his message, or at their attempt to misuse it by gratifying their spirit of violence and revenge under cover of non-violence, knew no bounds. One day when he was thus giving expression to his grief and disappointment, a friend suggested that Mahatmaji might again undertake a tour of the whole country with the special object of preaching the message of non-violence, and of inculcating among the people the spirit of obedience to the instructions of the Congress. But Mahatmaji said that he did not expect any good from such tour because the masses would be guided by the national workers, and would do whatever the latter would lead them to do. In his opinion, therefore, unless the conviction and belief of the workers had materially changed, it was not possible to carry on a mass movement, on an India-wide scale along non-violent lines.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MAHATMAJI THROWS HIMSELF INTO CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVITY.

Arriving at the Ashram, Mahatmaji turned all his inexhaustible store of energy towards devising ways and means for the organisation of efforts in connection with the constructive programme. On the basis of the monetary grant made by the Working Committee at Delhi for propaganda work, he conceived a new plan of work. He had Mr. Shuaib Qureshi already by his side, and he now summoned by wire Dr. Hardiker from Hubli, and Mr. Sundaram of the Allahabad "Independent" office. A national worker from Sindh, who had been recommended by Dr. Choitram sometime ago, was also directed to join him at once.

With the help of these workers Mahatmaji intended to bring out every week a supplement to "Young India" under the title of "Congress Bulletin" devoted wholly to the furtherance of constructive work. It was to be a record of progress of work in the different provinces of India on the lines of the new constructive programme, and also a general guide to the people so far as the details of the programme were concerned. One of the workers was to be constantly moving about the country and gather first-hand information about the working of the several items of the programme. Thus, the "Bulletin" was expected to establish a living contact with the different parts of this vast country. Mahatmaji felt that when he was in full possession of facts about the existing situation in the country, he would be able slowly and gradually to harness and direct the energy of the people towards the carrying out of the new programme laid down by him.

Then, he also began to devote his attention to the problem of establishing the national education movement in Guzarat on a sound footing, and of building a permanent habitation for the Guzarat Vidyapith. Professor Gidwani, with some four or five members of his staff, visited him

one of these days, when Mahatmaji described to them the programme upon which he desired to concentrate his energy for the whole year. He said National Education would form the main plank of his activities that year, and then added that a change of a revolutionary character was gradually coming upon him every day, as he thought about the problem of India in the light of his recent experiences. He had not totally given up the idea of civil disobedience ; but the conviction was growing upon him from day to day that the success of the new constructive programme would make the adoption of civil disobedience for the realisation of India's goal thoroughly unnecessary and superfluous. Or, if civil disobedience was at all to be resorted to, it should be undertaken only after the fulfilment of the constructive programme. Then, he said, the students of colleges and schools should now be directed towards their studies, and should no longer be engaged as national volunteers.

Thus, when Mahatmaji was preparing to throw himself heart and soul into the work of construction, *viz.*, organising the country for the production and distribution of Khaddar, for National Education, for the removal of Untouchability, and for Hindu-Moslem Unity, he was suddenly arrested on the 10th of March (1922), and all his work remained incomplete and unfulfilled for the time being.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MAHATMAJI'S ARREST.

The incidents of his arrest and trial have been described in detail in various publications, and are generally known to all who have taken any interest in the movement of non-co-operation, or in the great author of that movement. I shall not, therefore, repeat those incidents in this book, but shall confine myself to a description of other facts which I had a special opportunity of observing and knowing from my position as his Personal Assistant during the period.

The Government had made all arrangements for his arrest on the 12th of February, the date on which the civil disobedience campaign at Bardoli would have been launched had there been no violence on the part of the people at Chauri Chaura, and we knew that soldiers were picketted at places round about Bardoli as a measure of precaution against contingencies. But eventually the Government seemed to have changed their mind on account of the suspension of civil disobedience at the time. But the newspapers in England published a news that Mahatmaji's arrest had taken place on 12th February. This showed that the report about the original intention of Government to arrest Mahatmaji on that date, was true. When, however, the English public ultimately came to know that the arrest had been postponed, questions were raised in Parliament, and an agitation was started in the Press in England to force the hands of the Government in the matter.

Subsequently, we learnt at Delhi on 26th February, immediately after the conclusion of the session of the All-India Congress Committee that the Executive Council of the Viceroy had made their final decision for his arrest at an early date; and on our return to the Ashram the same rumour reached us from other sources also. A letter was received from Bombay on 6th March intimating that

the Government were making arrangements for the arrest. On 7th March, Mr. Shankerlal Banker arrived from Bombay with reliable information that we might expect the arrest to take place in the course of the next seven days. Mahatmaji was delighted to hear this from Mr. Shankerlal. The same evening he received a telegram from Seth Chotani urgently pressing him to go to Ajmere, if only for a day, to meet some well-known Moslem Divines (Ulemas), who had assembled there, and who were anxious to discuss the political situation with him.

On the 8th morning after prayer, Mahatmaji informed the Ashram people that there was a widespread rumour about his impending arrest; and so he instructed them afresh on their duties and responsibilities during his absence in gaol.

CHAPTER XXV.

"IF I AM ARRESTED": "THE DEATH DANCE."

Returning to his room from the prayer ground (8th March, morning), the first thing he did was to write an article under the title—"If I am Arrested." He began the article thus,—

"The rumour has been revived that my arrest is imminent. It is said to be regarded as a mistake by some officials that I was not arrested when I was to be, *i.e.*, on the 11th or 12th of February, and that the Bardoli decision ought not to have been allowed to affect the Government's programme. It is said, too, that it is now no longer possible for the Government to withstand the ever rising agitation in London for my arrest and deportation. I myself cannot see how the Government can avoid arresting me, if they want a permanent abandonment of civil disobedience, whether individual or mass."

Then, referring to civil disobedience Mahatmaji wrote:—

"I advised the Working Committee to suspend mass civil disobedience at Bardoli, because that disobedience would not have been civil, and if I am now advising all provincial workers to suspend even individual civil disobedience, it is because I know that any disobedience at the present stage will be not civil, but criminal. A tranquil atmosphere is an indispensable condition of civil disobedience."

Again,—“I doubt the sincerity of Englishmen who are born fighters, when they declaim against civil disobedience as if it was a diabolical crime to be punished with exemplary severity. If they have glorified armed rebellions and resorted to them on due occasions, why are many of them up in arms against the very idea of civil resistance? I can understand their saying that the attainment of a non-violent atmosphere is a virtual impossibility in India. I do not believe it, but I can appreciate such an objection.

What, however, is beyond my comprehension is the dead set made against the very theory of civil disobedience, as if it was something immoral. To expect me to give up the preaching of civil disobedience is to ask me to give up preaching peace, which would be tantamount to asking me to commit suicide.”

He concluded the article with the following instructions to his countrymen in the event of his arrest :—

“There should, therefore, be no *hartals*, no noisy demonstrations, no processions. I would regard the observance of perfect peace on my arrest as a mark of high honour paid to me by my countrymen. What I would love to see, however, is the constructive work of the Congress going on with clock-work regularity and the speed of the Punjab Express. I would love to see people who have hitherto kept back, voluntarily discarding all their foreign cloth and making a bonfire of it. Let them fulfil the whole of the constructive programme framed at Bardoli, and they will not only release me and other prisoners, but they will also inaugurate Swaraj and secure redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs. Let them remember the four pillars of Swaraj: Non-violence, Hindu-Moslem-Sikh-Parsi-Christian-Jew unity, total removal of Untouchability, and manufacture of hand-spun and hand-woven Khaddar completely displacing foreign cloth.”

As soon as this article was finished, he took up writing another. Shortly after, Mahatmaji suddenly called out to me by name, and in raptures exclaimed, “Krishnadas, see what a beautiful article I have written! It is indeed, a piece of beauty; see how I have described the condition of present-day India.” Never before did I find Mahatmaji going into raptures over any of his own writings. The caption of the article is “Death Dance,” and it gives a pen picture of the exploitation of India by an Imperialist Government, and all those who being attached to the “central corporation,” derive their sustenance from, and thrive at the cost of, the poor, toiling masses of the land. It is a “giddy dance of death from which no one cares to free himself”—cries out Mahatmaji in agony. The ringing words and rhythm of the article makes it almost like a

piece of prose-poem. I quote only a few sentences by way of illustration :—

“The Councillors want their fares and extras, the ministers their salaries, the lawyers their fees, the suitors their decrees, the parents such education for their boys as would give them status in the present life, the millionaires want facilities for multiplying their millions, and the rest their unmanly peace. The whole revolves beautifully round the central corporation. It is a giddy dance from which no one cares to free himself, and so, as the speed increases, the exhilaration is the greater. But it is a death dance, and the exhilaration is induced by the rapid heart-beat of a patient who is about to expire.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON THE EVE OF THE ARREST.

On the 8th, Mahatmaji sent the following wire to Mr. Prakasam on receipt of information about the arrest of Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayya :

"Glad to learn Venkatappayya's arrest. Hope there will be no hartal, no demonstration, no civil disobedience, not even mental anguish, but a grim determination to pursue the constructive programme. Most effective demonstration would be for every Andhra who loves Venkatappayya to discard all foreign cloth, take to spinning and remove untouchability. Attending your requirements—Gandhi."

Then, Mahatmaji left for Ajmere by train in the afternoon (8th March), accompanied by Mr. Shuaib Qureshi, and Mr. Parasram of Cawnpur.

On the 9th March (1922), the rumour about his imminent arrest began to reach us with added force and insistence. At Bombay, the people were under the impression on that day that the arrest had already taken place ; and telegrams were received from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, from such widely distant places as Allahabad and Wardha, asking for the verification of the widespread rumour. In the evening we learnt that a Government Code Telegram containing 150 words had been received at the Central Telegraph Office at Ahmedabad, but had been redirected to Ajmere, where, as already stated, Mahatmaji had gone by invitation from Seth Chotani to meet the Ulemas assembled at the place.

On the 10th March, we went to the Sabarmati station in expectation of Mahatmaji's return from Ajmere by the train reaching Sabarmati at 2 P.M. The rumour about the arrest had in the meantime spread like wildfire, and quite a number of people from Ahmedabad and neighbouring places had arrived at Sabarmati, and been anxiously

waiting for his return. As the train stopped at the Sabarmati station he got down from it with a face radiant with smiles, and was about to leave the precincts of the station escorted by a large crowd of people. At that moment a British soldier, who had been watching Mahatmaji from the train with wide and curious eyes, stretched out his hand as Mahatmaji was about to pass him, and said, "Mr. Gandhi, I must shake hands with you." Mahatmaji also stretched his hand which was immediately grasped by the soldier, who in the fullness of his heart stammered out some feeling words which, however, we could not catch. The reverence and affection shown to Mahatmaji by this ordinary British soldier touched the tenderest chords of all assembled there. Although Mahatmaji wanted to come away it was after some time that the soldier released his grasp and allowed him to part.

Mahatmaji left the station in a car, and I followed him on foot. While passing the gate of the Sabarmati gaol, a Policeman came to me in great haste, and enquired in anxious tones—"Has Bapuji come?" The incident revealed to me that even Government 'sepoys' attached to the gaol at Sabarmati addressed Mahatmaji as Bapuji. The 'sepoys' was also going to tell me something else, but seemed to have changed his mind on second thought.

Arriving at the Ashram at half past three, Mahatmaji rested for a while, and then began his usual routine of work. He sent the following wire to Seth Jamnalal Bajaj: "Thick rumour arrest; you Ramdas should come if not required there—Gandhi." He also informed the Congress office at Bombay about his probable movements by the following cryptic message—"Weather permitting going Bardoli Sunday—Gandhi."

Then gradually the evening prayer-time arrived, when Mahatmaji went and joined the prayer. He was in an exceptionally happy and hilarious mood. After the prayer he repaired to his room and dictated letters to Mr. Jayakar of Bombay, Mr. Kelkar of Poona, Mr. Gopala Menon of Malabar, Mr. Bhagavan Das of Benares, and Mons. Paul Richard, the French litterateur. These letters had to be posted the next day without his signature inasmuch as the arrest took place a little while after he had finished dictating.

them. I have thought fit to reproduce two only of these letters as they deal specially with some of the most vital problems of the Indian national movement, namely, the efficacy of non-violence as a political weapon, and the question of maintaining unity between Hindus and Mussalmans.

SATYAGRAHASHRAM

Sabarmati

10th March, 1922.

DEAR MR. JAYAKAR,

I do wish you get well and strong.

I thank you for your long letter, but I won't weary you with my counter-argument. As you know my arrest is reported to be imminent, but if I am not arrested I shall look forward to our meeting. Just one thing I would like to say in order to correct what seems to me to be a misapprehension. I should be sorry if anything I have written has led you to infer that I have in any shape or form altered my view about the efficacy of imprisonment for our salvation.

I have not lost faith in the responsiveness to sacrifice by those who compose the Government. Only those who have courted imprisonment have not all been of the right sort. I certainly expect no response whatsoever to the imprisonment of those who are full of violence in their hearts, and my reason for suspending even civil disobedience for the time being is to see if it is at all possible to produce an atmosphere of real non-violence. Thus my present view is not due to my discovery of greater hardness in the administrators, but to the painful discovery of much less non-violence now in our midst than I had expected.

Syt. M. R. JAYAKAR

399, Thakurdwar,

Bombay.

Yours sincerely,

SATYAGRAHASHRAM
Sabarmati,
10th March, 1922.

MY DEAR GOPALA MENON,

I certainly do remember your conviction.

I wish your venture all success. The only message that I can send in the midst of overwhelming work is for both Hindus and Moplahs to realise their future responsibility not to brood over the past. How to reach the Moplahs as also the class of Hindus whom you would want to reach through your newspaper is more than I can say, but I know that Hindus should cease to be cowardly. The Moplahs should cease to be cruel. In other words, each party should become truly religious. According to the Shastras, Hinduism is certainly not the creed of cowards. Equally certainly, Islam is not the creed of the cruel. The only way the terrible problem before you can be solved is by a few picked Hindus and Mussalmans working away in perfect unison and with faith in their mission. They ought not to be baffled by absence of results in the initial stages, and if you can get together from among your readers a number of such men and women your paper will have served a noble purpose.

Syt. N. GOPALA MENON,
Editor, Naveena Keralam,
6, Vellala Street, Vepery,
Madras.

Yours sincerely,

CHAPTER XXVII.

ARREST: MAHATMAJI IN SABARMATI GAOL.

The arrest took place at half past ten in the evening. The leave-taking from the Ashram, the desire he expressed before his surrender to hear his favourite hymn—"He is the true Vaishnava," etc.,* which was done in chorus by the Ashramites assembled; his meeting with Maulana Hasrat Mohani on the way; the utter joyfulness with which he greeted the arrest,—all these have been amply done justice to by many a previous writer. There was no show of force on the part of the Government. In fact, the Superintendent of Police was so courteous that he would not enter the Ashram but waited for Mahatmaji on the public road in his car, allowing Mahatmaji as much time as he desired to prepare himself for the surrender. While going to surrender himself, Mahatmaji began to mutter repeatedly in a delightful mood—"Oh! the happy day; the best thing has happened; the best thing indeed has happened."

Mrs. Gandhi, Anasuyaben, Syt. Chhaganlal Gandhi, Mr. Shuaib and myself were permitted to accompany him to the gaol, and I was privileged to prepare the bed for him on the first night. Before finally leaving him there, I prostrated myself at his feet. Moved by affection, he gave me a vigorous slap on my back. It was about 12 midnight when we returned to the Ashram. I could not close my eyes the whole of that night, and all the strength of my body and mind seemed to have evaporated. The last preceding seven months, which I had spent in Mahatmaji's company almost without a break, now appeared to my bewildered mind to have been a sort of a trance from which I had just recovered. In this state of separation I felt that I was like a rudderless ship cast adrift on the stormy sea of life.

* This hymn with an English rendering will be found on pp. 21, 2-293 of Vol. I of this book.

He was lodged in the Sabarmati gaol from the 10th to the 20th March (1922), during which time he was taken out twice. Firstly, when he was produced before the prosecuting Magistrate on the 11th, and again for the final trial before the Sessions Court on the 18th March (1922). So long as he was in the Sabarmati gaol we had every facility to visit him as often as we desired, but I had not the heart to go there. On the 12th March (Sunday), I received a note from him in English which is printed here in facsimile.

On the 16th, I myself wrote to him for direction about other matters, and also referred to the state of my mind owing to separation from him. Fortunately, however, it fell to me that very day to carry to him his midday meal—the gaol authorities having been kind enough to give us permission to take for him his meals from the Ashram. When I was about to leave, he called me to his side, and first of all took me to task for my giving way to grief. He then began to make various kind enquiries about my needs and wants. Referring to "*Young India*," he said*—"Have no worry over *Young India*. Don't be harassed by the thought that all the columns have to be filled at any cost, or that you must seek to make it attractive by appropriate and topical leading articles. If you can't fill up the sixteen columns, publish as much as you can; if no leading article be ready, let the issue go without it. You will do what you can without any strain on your nerves." Then, he said, he had decided to appoint Mr. Shuaib Qureshi as editor of "*Young India*," and asked me to give him as much help and co-operation as I could. Referring to Mr. Shuaib, he said—"Shuaib is a jewel of a man. The more you will get near him, the more you will appreciate his worth and the noble qualities of his head and heart."

He continued in this strain for some time more, and applied the healing balm to the wound in my heart. When I was somewhat comforted I enquired of him as to what I should do if the Government stopped the publication of "*Young India*." Mahatmaji replied—"You will simply bury yourself in my room, and begin to live like a true Yogi.

* Mahatmaji's custom was to speak in Hindi. I give the translation.

• ARREST: MAHATMAJI IN SABARMATI GAOL 403

That room is yours. Don't leave the Ashram till I return. If the Government forces us to stop all other activities, then (pointing to a Charka lying at some distance)—that is our work. I tell you it is my faith that all our duties, secular and spiritual, are embodied there. If you would closely scrutinise my activities, you will find that the Charka is my only contribution to the world. Therefore, the wide acceptance of my message to India will be truly indicated only by the spread of the Charka. I am not the originator of the idea of civil disobedience, although it is true that I have developed that idea, and have discovered a more extensive field for its application. Besides working the Charka, you may also arrange to run a hand-written issue of "Young India." In that case, don't make the size of the paper more than one sheet of foolscap paper. You must learn how to compress news and ideas within that short space," etc.

For the ten days that Mahatmaji was confined in the Sabarmati prison (10th March 10-30 P.M.—20th March 12 midnight), the gaol was transformed into a sort of a royal Darbar. A regular stream of people used to come and crowd at the gaol-gate seeking for an opportunity to see Mahatmaji with the permission of the gaol-authorities. I again went to the gaol on the morning of the 18th, the date fixed for the Sessions Court Trial, for a "Darshan" not to be repeated perhaps for many a month, or perhaps, as I thought, for many a year. He was then surrounded by many well-known and renowned leaders of India, who were asking him questions as to future programme of work for the country. After some time spent in this way, Mahatmaji rose to have his bath. Pandit Malaviyaji, who was there at the time, desired me to go and help Mahatmaji. Seth Jammalal Bajaj and I accordingly went to the bathing-place, and we felt as if we were anointing the Master before his crucifixion. Mr. Healy, the Superintendent of Police, arrived about this time to escort Mahatmaji to the Sessions Court. We hastened to come out of the gaol and proceeded to the Ahmedabad Circuit House, situated on the other bank of the river Sabarmati, where the authorities had decided to hold the trial.

The sights and incidents connected with this memorable trial have been described in detail by different writers, and

Sessions Case No. 45 of 1922.

Imperator Vs } (1) Mr. M. K. Ghandhi.
 } (2) Mr. S. G. Banker.

Date of hearing **Saturday 18th March 1922.**

Government circuit house, Shahibag.



ADMISSION PASS.

K. K. Thakur

Registrar,

Sessions Court,

AHMEDABAD

it is not necessary for me to tread the same ground here. The pleasant smile that played on Mahatmaji's lips when the Judge pronounced a sentence of imprisonment for six long years; his cheerfulness, good humour, and self-control, and above all, his abounding courtesy to the Judge, who equally reciprocated the courtesy—charmed and captivated the hearts of those who witnessed the trial. Nevertheless, a loud wail rose from the assembled people when the Judge pronounced his sentence. I cannot describe the heart-rending scene when he was torn away from his near and dear ones, and all those who had followed him and remained in intimate touch with him during the vicissitudes of his career in the field of Indian politics. Some who had been most intimate with him simply ran away from the scene lest they should break down under the swelling emotions that were agitating them. Amidst all that tumult and confusion, I stood at a corner as one dazed, and forgot to approach him and take my final leave. A friend, who found me in that plight, caught me by both his hands, and dragged me into Mahatmaji's presence. I bowed my head to him in reverence when he affectionately caught me by the tuft of my hair and repeated his desire that I should not leave the Ashram until he returned.

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He was lodged in the Sabarmati gaol for the two days following on the order of imprisonment; then, all on a sudden, with no previous information or warning, he was removed from Sabarmati at dead of night on the 20th March. For two days after the removal we had no information about his whereabouts, and "Ba" (Mrs. Gandhi) passed those days almost in a state of living death. However, after two days of intense suspense and anxiety we learnt through non-official sources that both Mahatmaji and Mr. Shankerlal Banker had been transferred to and lodged at the gaol at Yerowada near Poona.

PART VII.

SUMMING-UP—I.

THE NON-CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME: ITS TWOFOLD OBJECTIVE.

A short review of the main purpose of the story as narrated in these pages seems to me to be necessary. As already pointed out in the general Preface prefixed to volume First, the main phases of the whole movement of non-violent non-co-operation could be represented as falling under the following four heads:—

(i) "Awakening," meaning a political awakening on a mass-scale through the movement.

(ii) "Preparations," meaning preparations on a mass-scale for a political struggle of a non-violent character.

(iii) "On the March," meaning the progress of the struggle in its critical stages.

(iv) "Halt," meaning the state of abeyance in the struggle, implying a fresh course of preparations.

The first two of these four phases formed the subject matter of volume First of this work. The third and fourth phases have been dealt with in this volume. It seems to me, however, necessary to go beyond this general statement, and present what I may call a synthetic review of what has gone into this volume. The object of this review is to unravel the central purpose. It would bring into view, the connecting thread which runs through the whole body of facts and events as delineated in these pages, and makes of them one single whole. I must begin, however, by making certain statements of a general character which are necessary for a proper elucidation of the central themes. These may be stated as follows:—

For the political emancipation of this country, Mahatma Gandhi has placed before his countrymen two alternative methods of work. Either would lead to success. One of them follows the easier course. It is, however, in Mahatma's eyes, an external remedy, for it does not go to the

root of the matter, although for the moment it would ensure success.

The other method from his point of view is surer, although more difficult to carry out; because it prescribes an internal remedy for India's chronic, political ailment. The former has a direct and exclusive reference to the intelligentsia of the country; the latter, to the Indian masses. Thus, firstly, Mahatmaji prescribes that the educated classes, who by their voluntary services help the Imperialist Government in India in maintaining and consolidating the Imperial Power, should withdraw themselves from their allotted work, and cease to constitute what he calls "the voluntary branch of the (Imperial) Administration"* and cease also "to represent the arm of Authority."† For in that way according to Mahatmaji, they could bring that Power from its pedestal of despotic authority and sovereignty to a position of subordination to the General Will, i.e., the will of the general body of the people. In other words, Mahatmaji's call *in the first instance* is to the educated classes to boycott the Administration by withdrawing their voluntary services to it; and Mahatmaji's contention is that the fourfold boycott as prescribed by the earlier non-co-operating Congresses beginning with the Special Congress (Calcutta) of September 1920, was an immediate, infallible remedy. Thus, we find Mahatmaji writing as follows:—"The boycotts have two objects. First, to persuade those who hold titles etc., to give them up; secondly, to keep the Congress pure from the influence of the institutions boycotted. If the first had been immediately successful, we should have attained the goal at once."‡ And again, writing at a far earlier date§ in 1920, even before the inauguration of non-co-operation by the Congress,—we find Mahatmaji making the following appeal to the higher classes among the intelligentsia. "I would submit to my distinguished countrymen who occupy high offices that their giving up their offices will bring the struggle to a speedy end, and would probably

* *Young India*, 29th May 1924.

† *Young India*, 17 April 1924.

‡ *Young India*, May 29, 1924.

§ *Young India*, July 21, 1920.

obviate the danger attendant upon the masses being called upon to signify their disapproval by withdrawing co-operation.* If the title-holders gave up their titles, if the holders of honorary offices gave up their appointments, and if the high officials gave up their posts, and the would-be Councillors boycott the Councils, the Government would quickly come to its senses, and give effect to the people's will. The taking of the steps suggested by me will constitute the peaceablest revolution the world has ever seen. Once the infallibility of the non-co-operation is realised, there is an end to all bloodshed and violence in any shape or form."

Thus, one of the two remedies devised by Mahatmaji was the non-co-operation of the intelligentsia with the Administration. This proposal for the achievement of Swaraj by means of the boycott of certain political institutions of the Government by the educated classes was in the first instance suggested by Mahatmaji. And it was so advocated by him because it was the easier course for the country to adopt. In a Calcutta speech delivered on 13th December 1920, Mahatma Gandhi said—"I am telling you that so long as we do not isolate ourselves from this Government, we are co-operating with it through schools, law-courts and councils, through service, civil and military, and through payment of taxes and foreign trade. It was not a joke when I said on the Congress platform that Swaraj could be established in one year if there was sufficient response from the nation. I have proposed a limited programme, having special regard to the educated classes. We seem to be labouring under the illusion that we cannot probably live without Councils, law-courts and schools *provided by the Government*. The moment we are disillusioned we have Swaraj." [The italics are mine.]

The other alternative remedy which Mahatmaji has suggested is, as has been stated already, an internal remedy. It is the development of the internal strength of the nation, *i.e.*, of the masses through their peaceful organisation.

* This is evidently possible in the case of the masses through a campaign of non-payment of taxes, or any other form of civil disobedience by the masses.

It will be seen that although Mahatmaji had always this 'internal plan in his mind,—his first appeal was to the leaders of the people, the educated classes to come forward and take their proper place in the coming fight by boycotting such political institutions of British Imperialism in India as went to maintain and consolidate its hold and power. So the call to the intelligentsia for boycott preceded Mahatmaji's call to the masses to prepare themselves for non-co-operation with the Government. The following extracts let us into the secret of Mahatmaji's mental working with regard to both of these aspects of the question.

"When India as a whole will respond by action I cannot say. But this I do say that the educated classes to whom the Congress has appealed will one day—and probably during this year (1921)—respond in a manner worthy of the nation. But whether they do or not, the progress of the nation cannot be arrested by any person or class. The uneducated artisans, the women, the men in the street, are taking their share in the movement. The appeal to the educated classes paved the way for them. The educated classes had to be put upon their trial. The beginning had to be made by and through them. Non-co-operation has hitherto followed the natural course."*

The method of non-co-operation by way of the fourfold boycott as laid down by the earlier non-co-operating Congresses was, according to Mahatmaji, an external and negative method. The internal and positive method, according to him, consisted in treading the path of the peaceful organisation of the country by means of the constructive programme of Congress work. For that way, he insisted, lay the development of the internal strength of the nation. Mahatmaji is very explicit on the point:—"Even if all the titled friends gave up their titles, and if schools, courts and councils were entirely deserted; and being thus embarrassed, the Government abdicated in our favour; and if we had no constructive programme to our credit, we could not conduct Swaraj. We should be entirely helpless."† To the same purpose writing only a

* *Young India*, 20th April, 1921.

† *Young India*, 8th May, 1924.

week before his arrest, he warned the members of the All-India Congress Committee—that “even if they could defeat the Government, they could not conduct the Government of the country without serious and laborious organisation and construction.”* Mahatmaji’s primary insistence, therefore, is on the evolution of the internal strength of the nation, *i.e.*, of the masses, by way of their peaceful organisation. But this is only a general way of stating things. The implications of this internal method of winning Swaraj are as follows:—

By a non-violent or peaceful organisation of the masses, Mahatmaji really meant or aimed at the *awakening* of the masses, or the development of the *will* of the Indian people, which at present lay dormant or inert. The evolution of the mass-will along peaceful lines was the real, ultimate objective. Mahatmaji did not want the masses to be led like “dumb, *driven* cattle” by whatever agency. He did not want them to be under the thumb or the leading strings either of the ‘classes’ or of the Imperialist Government. He wanted the people to be roused and awakened to a sense of their own power, and their proper dignity. And, according to him, unless and until that stage was reached there could be no “Swaraj for the masses,”—no “Democratic Swaraj.” The masses must know, therefore, how to stand on their own feet and be able to assert themselves, and prevent exploitation of themselves by whatever power, alien or indigenous.

All this appears to be so self-evident that it should not require any authority to support or establish it. The testimony of Mahatmaji himself on this very point is also clear and unequivocal. “Real Swaraj,” says he, “will not come by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.”† And again,—“No method for the attainment of Swaraj can possibly succeed unless the masses also adopt it. If the definition of Swaraj includes the freedom

* *Young India*, 2nd March 1922.

† *Young India*, 29 January 1925.

not of a certain number of individuals, or of certain classes, but of the whole of the masses of India, only non-co-operation and all that it means can regulate that mass consciousness which is absolutely necessary for democratic Swaraj."* The quotation that follows clinches the matter. Mahatmaji sees that Swaraj attained by the application of violence will not help the masses—"To exchange British brute force for any other brute force is no real remedy for the ills of India. If it is brute force that is to rule, then the millions of India must learn the art of war, or must for ever remain prostrate at the feet of him who wields the sword, whether he is *pardeshi* (foreign) or *Suadeshi* (indigenous). If it is the steel that is to decide the issue, it must not be Sikh or Gurkha steel; it must be All-India steel. Otherwise the millions must remain 'dumb, driven cattle.' *Non-co-operation is an attempt to awaken the masses to a sense of their dignity and power.*"† And to make his position absolutely clear, (1) that his ideal of Indian Swaraj is 'Swaraj for the masses'—and nothing else, and (2) that to that end a mass-awakening i.e. "an awakening of the masses to a sense of their dignity and power" is essential, and (3) that this is only practicable by the application of non-violent means, Mahatmaji lays down:—"Let there be no manner of doubt that Swaraj established by non-violent means will be different in kind from Swaraj that can be established by armed rebellion."‡

I have attempted to make clear the full significance, or rather the full implications, according to Mahatmaji, of the proposition that Swaraj was to be achieved by the application of "the non-violent method", that is to say, by the peaceful organisation of the Indian masses. This development of the internal strength of the country was, according to him, the only sure and safe way for the attainment of Swaraj for the masses, and also its retention by them. Further, Mahatmaji was an out-and-out believer in the capacity of the masses to respond to efforts that may be made to awaken them to a sense of their strength and dignity. He was rooted in the belief that the General

* *Young India*, 18 March 1926.

† *Young India*, 1st December 1920.

‡ *Young India*, 2 March 1922.

Will of the people' may be so progressively developed and organised that it would be able to hold its own, whenever necessary, against the onslaughts of Imperial autocracy, or if the worst comes to the worst, against the onslaughts of the classes themselves. It was also clear to him that the progressive development and organisation of such strength in the country along peaceful lines would progressively and automatically curb and control the autocratic tendencies of the Imperialist Government, and make it progressively amenable to the General Will.

All this necessarily leads to a very important corollary on which Mahatmaji has laid stress, as disarming those who have a sort of superstitious fear of mass civil disobedience. The corollary is that the development of power by the people to put up a non-violent fight with the Government, or to put it in another way, the development of the power of popular resistance to measures of official autocracy, along lines of self-suffering and self-sacrifice, would make the need for the actual exercise by the masses of such power superfluous, or at least a remote contingency. The implication of all this is that civil disobedience of the aggressive type—which is a particular type of peaceful revolt against the Government,—would hardly be necessary as soon as there has been a real mass-awakening. In other words, the application of the method of civil disobedience would hardly be necessary as soon as the general body of the people have been roused to a sense of their collective power; as soon as, that is to say, the masses instead of being cowed down, should have learnt the art of peaceful, organised resistance to the autocratic power of Government. Mahatmaji has referred to this aspect of the matter also. He says that "by continuous service of, and identification with, the masses, we can expect successfully to lead them to a peaceful victory;" but he goes on to add that "when we have arrived at that stage, mass civil disobedience will hardly be necessary."*

So far then as to the two alternative methods, one external and the other internal, suggested by Mahatma Gandhi for the attainment of Indian Swaraj.

* *Young India*, 23 April 1925.

SUMMING-UP—II.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN ANSWER TO GOVERNMENT LAW- LESSNESS.

The position, however, which Mahatmaji had to face in 1921 was this. He had been hoping that the educated classes would so largely respond to the call of the fourfold boycott as laid down in the Calcutta and Nagpur sessions (1920) of the Indian National Congress, as to make the launching of the sort of peaceful revolt by the mass, technically known as aggressive mass civil disobedience, wholly unnecessary. The educated classes, however, did not so very largely respond to the call of the boycotts as to rule out all thought of aggressive civil disobedience as a needless superfluity. And yet (as the All-India Congress Committee, which is the Executive of National Congress, held at its Bezwada session, March 31, 1921), "civil disobedience was not expressly comprised in the Congress resolution in relation to non-co-operation." Then, there was another factor in the situation. The essential condition of civil disobedience, was that it must remain civil, *i.e.* non-violent, all the time, and not degenerate into "uncivil", *i.e.* violent resistance. Therefore, a period of preparation, a period of probation, so to say, was a fundamental necessity for the success of a non-violent campaign. Mahatmaji, therefore, was placed in a position of extreme embarrassment when he saw that the boycotts had not proved so successful as to rule out all consideration of a campaign of mass civil disobedience. On the other hand, the time had not yet arrived to accede to the insistent demand of the great body of non-co-operating workers in the country, who had been the target of official violence. They urged that a reply to the growing repression was called for, and that Mahatmaji should no longer hold them in the leash, but must allow them to enter on a campaign of civil disobedience on a mass scale.

The exact state of affairs at the time was hit off in the

following resolution of the All-India Congress Committee passed at their Bombay sitting on 30th July 1921:—

“The All-India Congress Committee has taken note of the reasonable desire of the workers in the United Provinces and other parts to take up civil disobedience in answer to the repressive measures of Local Governments; but with a view to ensure greater stability of non-violent atmosphere throughout India, and in order to test the measure of influence attained by the Congress over the people, and further in order to retain on the part of the nation an atmosphere free from ferment for the proper and swift prosecution of Swadeshi, the All-India Congress Committee is of opinion that civil disobedience should be postponed till the completion of the programme referred to in the resolution on Swadeshi, after which the committee will not hesitate, if necessary, to recommend a course of civil disobedience, even though it might have to be adopted by a Special Session of the Congress; provided, however, that it is open to any Province or place to adopt civil disobedience subject to the previous approval of the Working Committee* obtained within the constitution through the Provincial Congress Committee concerned.”

The strength and volume of repressive activities of the Government of Lord Reading was, however, increasing by leaps and bounds.† Mahatmaji, therefore, felt the need of placating the workers and yielding a bit to their growing clamour to enter on a campaign of non-violent resistance to the growing lawlessness of the Indian official world. What the workers wanted at the time was permission to invite arrest and imprisonment by peacefully ignoring measures adopted by the Government ostensibly in the name of Law and Order, but in reality only to repress the movement. Thus, it happened that only three months after the passing of the previous resolution of 30th July

* A small compact committee of some two to fifteen members of the All-India Congress Committee, who would meet as often as necessary to transact all urgent business and be responsible to the A. I. C. C., which latter body would meet less often, being charged to decide larger questions of policy while being responsible to the parent body, namely, the Indian National Congress.

† Vide Appendix A for corroboration of this statement.

1921, withholding civil disobedience, Mahatmaji saw the need of reconsidering the matter. He felt, indeed, that something had to be done to meet the demands of the situation, which was growing in intensity on account of the growing lawlessness of the Government.

So on November 4, 1921, the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution granting permission to Provincial Committees to offer civil resistance to official lawlessness directed against the workers. But even here the conditions which had to be fulfilled in the first instance, that is to say, before civil disobedience even of an individual character could be offered,—these preliminary conditions were made so stringent that what was given away with one hand might be said to have been taken away with the other. The fact of the matter was that Mahatmaji in his heart of hearts was feeling that notwithstanding deep provocation offered by official lawlessness, the country still needed a further course of preparation in non-violence and non-violent work, before she could with safety, or to his satisfaction, embark on a campaign of mass civil disobedience. Therefore was it that the right of civil disobedience granted by the famous November resolution of 4th November, 1921 was so carefully guarded and regulated. The net result was that the exercise of the right meant and involved a strenuous course of preparation, and it appeared to me that, broadly speaking, the grant of the right in question was arranged by Mahatmaji partly with an eye to facilitating such intensive preparation along lines of non-violence.

Then came the visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales only two short weeks after. But an All-India hartal had been proclaimed by the Congress Executive against the visit to take effect throughout the greater cities of India, on the very day of his landing. This All-India hartal on the 17th November of 1921, became so very effective that Lord Reading, the Viceroy as well as the European mercantile world in India saw in it a menace not only to the success of the Prince's visit but also to the continuance of British supremacy over India. Hence proclamations and notifications making illegal all peaceful volunteer organisations and peaceful public meetings followed in rapid succession; and the elementary rights

of free speech and free association were taken away. The result was a reaction, and a new orientation in non-cooperation politics. Mahatmaji grasped the altered situation and immediately made preparations to meet it. And so we find him writing,—“Swaraj, the Khilafat, and the Punjab occupy now a subordinate place to the issue sprung upon the country by the Government. We must first make good the right of free speech and free association before we can make further progress towards our goal. If the Government is allowed to destroy non-violent activities in the country, however dangerous they may be to its existence, even the work of the Moderates must come to a standstill. In the general interest, therefore, we must defend these elementary rights with our lives. We cannot be coerced into welcoming the Prince; nor can we be coerced into disbanding volunteer associations or giving up any other activities which we may deem desirable for our growth. We must be content to die if we cannot live as free men and women.”*

And so in answer to these aggressive official tactics, individual defensive civil resistance to official notifications and orders started on a mass scale. The Viceroy, Lord Reading, who had expected an immediate falling down of the walls of Jericho, was “sorely puzzled and perplexed” at the new turn of affairs. His political strategy had failed him egregiously, and his Lordship was forced to descend from his gubernatorial height to diplomacy, though under cover, to see if the ban on the Prince’s visit could not be lifted by inducement, *e.g.*, the holding of a so-called Round Table Conference under the auspices of the Government of India. This proposal has a history.† But it could not secure Mahatmaji’s blessing for reasons fully detailed elsewhere. So nothing came of it although Lord Reading in his reply to the Moderate deputation that waited upon him in Calcutta on 21st December, 1921 played with the members of the deputation by his proffered statement that His Excellency did not wholly close the door of a Round Table Conference, but that he was still

* *Young India*, 5th January, 1922.

† *Vide* Part II of this volume.

agreeable to further negotiation in the same direction. Probably His Lordship was not at the time wholly disillusioned. He might have been hoping that the lure of a Round Table Conference might yet be a means of bringing to bear upon Mahatma Gandhi some more pressure by the Moderates, in the direction of withdrawing the boycott of the Prince. Whatever it was, diplomacy had no effect upon Mahatmaji's mentality and the ban on the Prince's welcome was not lifted by the Congress. The inevitable consequence followed; repressive lawlessness went up by leaps and bounds. And so when the Indian National Congress met in the last week of December 1921, at Ahmedabad in the Bombay Presidency it felt compelled to answer governmental lawlessness by sanctioning not only individual civil disobedience of a defensive nature, but also "aggressive mass civil disobedience as the only civilised and effective substitute for armed rebellion whenever every other remedy for preventing arbitrary, tyrannical and emasculating use of authority has been tried and failed."

Nevertheless, the conditions with which the sanctioned measures were hedged in were far from easy. They were, in fact, more stringent than those laid down in the 4th November resolution. For Mahatmaji there was still the fear that aggressive civil resistance once started might degenerate into an "uncivil" i.e. violent revolt. Mahatmaji's efforts were, therefore, unceasing in the direction of preparation of a non-violent atmosphere in the country. But the Government of India under Lord Reading were equally unceasing in their efforts to bring the resisters down to their knees by the exercise in an organised fashion of lawless and autocratic power through the thousand and one channels open to it. Mahatmaji, therefore, felt that his hands were being prematurely forced. He felt that the course of further preparatory training in non-violence and non-violent discipline and organisation which he wanted the people to undergo was being prematurely cut short. He was, in fact, in the position of a General who could neither beat a retreat, nor advance with full confidence in the skill and efficiency of the army under him. In the complexity of the situation, but not without much heart-searching, Mahatmaji yielded to the importunities of a

group of leading Moderate politicians to give them another chance with Lord Reading to bring about a Round Table Conference, which was only possible if Mahatmaji postponed for a while his contemplated campaign at Bardoli. The reason for his reluctance to agree to the proposal for the conference, was that the conference wanted to bring about a Round Table Conference in which the representatives of the Government and the representatives of the people might sit together as co-equals and discuss all pending disputes. But Mahatmaji saw that the idea that the people's representatives would be regarded as co-equal members by the official representatives was wholly a delusion. The Government of India were entrenched behind their bayonets; nor had they shown any signs of a changed heart; nor were the people thoroughly prepared through non-violent discipline and organisation to demand and enforce the co-equality which the Round Table Conference postulated. Hence in Mahatmaji's view the proposal of having a Round Table Conference was to perpetuate a delusion. In his letter dated 1st February to Lord Reading he referred to the matter in the following words:—"In the present mood* of the Government of India and in the present unprepared state of the country in respect of the complete control of the forces of violence Non-co-operators were unwilling to have anything to do with the Malaviya Conference whose object was to induce your Excellency to convene a Round Table Conference."

Mahatmaji's friends of the Moderate school of politicians had requested of Mahatmaji time to call an All-Parties' Conference† and enter into further negotiations with the Viceroy. They had faith in Lord Reading and felt that if only united pressure could be brought to bear on his Lordship, he would resile from his position of obduracy and agree to convene a Round Table Conference to settle all pending outstanding issues and disputes between the Government and the People. The All-Parties Conference,

* That is, in the present unrepentant mood of the Government with its attitude of aiming a crushing blow at the Non-co-operators through their armed power of repression.

† This Conference has been described as Bombay (Malaviya) Conference.

therefore, met at Bombay on 14th and 15th January, 1922 in which Mahatmaji took up the role of an adviser, and certain resolutions were passed to which Mahatmaji agreed. But Lord Reading remained obdurate and nothing came of these efforts of the conference, much to the disappointment and chagrin of those Moderate leaders who had pinned their faith on the sincerity of Lord Reading's declaration before the Moderate deputationists in Calcutta on 21st December, 1921 as to his Lordship's agreeableness to further negotiations in the direction of a Round Table Conference. To this summary rejection by Lord Reading of the resolutions of the Bombay All-Parties' Conference just referred to, Mahatmaji makes allusion, when he says in his letter of 1st February, 1922 addressed to His Excellency the Viceroy:—"Although in my opinion the terms of the resolutions were quite in keeping with your own requirements as I understood them through your Calcutta speech* and otherwise, you have summarily rejected the proposal of a Round Table Conference. In the circumstances, there is nothing before the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands, including the elementary rights of free speech, free association, and free press."

* That is, Lord Reading's reply to the address of the Moderate deputation that had waited upon him in Calcutta on 21 December, 1921.

SUMMING UP—III.

GOVERNMENT FORCES MAHATMA GANDHI'S HANDS.

The net result of the previous discussion was to demonstrate that Mahatmaji was not at all anxious to precipitate a struggle with the Government, that is to say, until he felt thoroughly prepared and confident as to the reliability of the forces under his command. But on the other hand, the Government of India were so arranging matters that the margin of choice left to Mahatmaji to postpone the struggle was daily becoming smaller and smaller.

The story of how the Government of Lord Reading was precipitating matters and, so to say, forcing Mahatmaji's hands, the story, in other words, to quote from Mahatmaji himself,* of "wholesale suppression of peaceful volunteers, or equally peaceful public meetings, under a distorted use of an extraordinary law† which was passed in order to deal with activities which were manifestly violent both in intention and action" has been summarised elsewhere.‡ This charge of organised repression in the guise of the maintenance of Law and Order was a later count in the indictment against the Government. For the original movement of non-co-operation was inaugurated "to mark a national revolt against the Government for its consistently criminal refusal to appreciate India's resolve regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj."§ Thus, repression upon repression followed. Firstly, the original movement of non-co-operation which aimed at the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, and, generally speaking, compelling the Imperialist autocracy to bow to the General Will of the people—which is the very substance of Swaraj—that

* *Vide* Mr. Gandhi's Letter (known as his 'Ultimatum') to the Viceroy, dated 1st February, 1922, reproduced in Part V of this volume.

— † Criminal Law Amendment. Act, Part II of 1908.

‡ This summary is given as an *Appendix* to this volume.

§ Quoted from Mahatma Gandhi's Letter to the Viceroy, dated 1st February, 1922.

movement had to be crushed. That was the object of Repression No. I. Then, the determination of purpose among the leaders and the people which resulted in a remarkable manifestation of All-India popular feeling against the Prince's visit, which, again, had been engineered by Lord Reading and the Imperialist Government for political purposes,—that determination had to be combated and brought under. That was the object of Repression No. II. Now, if the country had to preserve its self-respect and honour as a political entity, these two items of repressive activity had to be opposed and neutralised by the non-co-operating Congress and its leaders. How? By the use only of the arm of peaceful resistance to the Government on a mass scale, such resistance being "the only civilised and effective method of preventing the arbitrary, tyrannical and emasculating use of authority when every other remedy has been tried and has failed."†

But, throughout, Mahatma Gandhi felt the need of postponing aggressive mass civil disobedience as long as possible, although the ever-growing pressure of official repression hardly left any choice for him in the matter. The result was that Mahatmaji was forced to take action and apprise Lord Reading, the Viceroy, in a letter (already referred to) dated 1st February, 1922, of his intention to embark on mass civil disobedience of an aggressive character at Bardoli in the second week of the month. Nevertheless, it would appear from a study of the letter itself that it was not the letter of a General who was marching with sure steps towards assured victory. The language employed did not imply any great confidence in the eventual success of the contemplated campaign at Bardoli. Mahatmaji was, as it were, balancing himself against two opposing forces which equally claimed and deserved his consideration; and the choice he made was to him a choice forced on him by the dire exigencies of the situation. He did not feel any triumphant sense of preparedness for the projected peaceful revolt. And why? Not because with him the Imperialist Government was omnipotent, equipped as it might be

† Quoted from Resolution No. I of the Indian National Congress held at Ahmedabad, December 1921.

from head to foot with armed weapons of offence and defence. No. His apprehensions were just the other way. The Congress had not yet fully mastered the forces of violence in the country, although it was true that there was a general atmosphere of non-violence prevailing. And therefore, if the projected campaign of aggressive mass civil disobedience at Bardoli was to take place, there might be some risks of a possible outbreak of political violence elsewhere, simultaneously, or in its wake.

Mahatmaji would, therefore, have liked to wait till he had succeeded in evolving, throughout the country, a non-violent atmosphere such as would have eschewed all possibilities of risk. But that was not to be. For, as he states in his 'Letter' to the Viceroy—"But this lawless repression in a way unparalleled in the history of this unfortunate country has made the immediate adoption of mass civil disobedience an imperative duty." On the other hand, "Had the Government's policy remained neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the adoption of civil disobedience of an aggressive type, *till the Congress acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater discipline among the millions of its adherents.*"† Such was Mahatmaji's language in his letter to the Viceroy.

It is thus clear beyond peradventure that Mahatmaji would have gladly postponed starting his campaign, if at all that was possible. Accordingly, in the concluding paragraph of the said letter he thought fit to place before Lord Reading a certain choice of action, the acceptance of which by his Lordship would have enabled Mahatmaji indefinitely to suspend the projected campaign. This alternative was as follows:—"As the Head of the Government of India his Excellency should agree to declare in clear terms a policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country, whether they be regarding the Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs or Swaraj, or any other purpose, and even though they fall under

† The *Italics* are mine.

the repressive sections of the Penal Code, or the Criminal Procedure Code, or other repressive laws, *subject always to the condition of non-violence.*" And in the event of the Viceroy accepting the proposal about the suggested declaration, Mahatmaji would find in it evidence of a change of heart of the Government,—an evidence, that is to say, of a desire on the part of the Government of Lord Reading to follow, and not flout, public opinion.

It is clear that Mahatmaji's object in placing the alternative proposal before the Viceroy was to ensure that the form of warfare waged by Lord Reading's Government should cease to be barbarous, and undergo a new orientation. It should, in fact, be a civilised form of warfare that the Government should wage with their political opponents of the non-co-operating Congress. The kind of warfare waged by the Government, was, such was Mahatmaji's contention, barbaric in essence, although disguised under a civilised cloak, the cloak of Law and Order.

Finally, and as a necessary corollary deducible from the previous proposal about a 'declaration of policy,' Mahatmaji made the suggestion in his letter of 1st February, 1922 to the Viceroy that his Government must be prepared to allow the agitation for the attainment of Swaraj and the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat to proceed, so long as, and to the extent that, such agitation was not tainted with violence. In other words, according to Mahatmaji, there must be no attempt on the part of the Government, on any false pretext to strike down the agitation, because only of its political implications.

Such are the views here drawn out in some detail for purposes of better elucidation, which Mahatmaji placed before Lord Reading in his above-mentioned letter of 1st February, 1922. They will be found summed up in the following extracts therefrom:—"If the Government make the requested declaration* I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion, and shall therefore have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding the public opinion without

* For the text of the "declaration" see above.

violent restraint from either side ; and trust to the working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive civil disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strict neutrality or refused to yield to clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India."

To sum up : The principles enunciated and embodied in the foregoing statement by Mahatma Gandhi in his letter to Lord Reading were a necessary corollary from the suggested 'declaration' about non-violence which, if accepted by his Lordship, would have given a new orientation to the Government policy. For the 'declaration' was to be "a declaration in clear terms" of a policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country. This declaration plus the corollary would have constituted for the Government a policy of action which would have eschewed violence on the part of the Government in their dealings with a mode of political agitation which was intended to be, and was carried on, in a spirit of non-violence. Such a policy, again, while eschewing Governmental violence, would at the same time have laid *no* ban on any 'violent' action by the Government against any form of 'violent' action on the part of any individual or group of individuals enrolled under the banner of non-violent non co-operation. In other words, the Government was to be given liberty of forcible action only under certain specified contingencies, and under no other.

So far the Government could have hardly anything to find fault with. But the differences lay deeper. For the policy adumbrated by Mahatmaji involved political consequences which an Imperial autocracy anxious to perpetuate its political hold on the Indian Dependency would hardly be prepared to acquiesce in. For the policy in question affects, in truth, the very foundations of Imperial supremacy. Neither was Mahatma Gandhi unaware of the full political implications of the propositions which he had asked Lord Reading to adopt and give effect to.

Mahatmaji was quite alive to the fact that if the Imperialist Government once yielded to his propositions, they must be prepared also for its inevitable, logical conclusion.

In other words, they must be prepared for the contingency of having to renounce Imperial sovereignty, or, which is the same thing, be prepared to become amenable to the General Will in a certain likely event. And that likely event was that in the absence of an attempt at a violent suppression by the Government, the non-co-operation movement through its progressive non-violence, and its propaganda of non-violent constructive activities, might by a natural process of evolution so grow and develop as to be an all-compelling force in the country, with an independent power and authority over the millions. That would be the likely event under the altered circumstances. Would Lord Reading welcome it?

In understanding the full inwardness of Imperialism in India, the point may be rubbed in further. We have noted that the method that was being followed by the Government of Lord Reading in dealing with the situation created by the non-co-operation movement was in essence a barbaric method, its sole object being either to bring on a slow, steady wearing out of the movement, or its violent suppression. The 'declaration' and the 'policy' which Mahatmaji suggested to Lord Reading to subscribe to and adopt was, as we have seen, intended to persuade his Excellency to fight out the popular movement with clean weapons. While Mahatmaji on his own part, gave a guarantee that he and his non-co-operating party and Congress should also apply in their fight with the Government the same principle and method of non-violence, with option to the Government to interfere and put down violence. But assuming that both sides pursued the non-violent method in the prosecution of the fight, the question that arose and could not be shelved was this. If the results of the contest, in consequence of the Government's altered policy showed a progressive development, organisation and consolidation of the national will and national feeling in the direction of Swaraj, would the Government be prepared to welcome it? In other words, would the Government of Lord Reading be prepared to renounce Imperial autocracy in favour of self-determination by the people, if and when as the result of non-interference with the movement by the Government, except for purposes of keeping the movement

free from violence, non-co-operation became a power in the land?

That and nothing less, was the ultimate issue round which everything turned. The rights and wrongs of the non-co-operation movement, whatever they were, were not at bottom the determining factors with Lord Reading and his Imperialist colleagues or masters. In his 'Letter,' therefore, Mahatmaji sought to bring out the issue from its lair, and openly presented it to the Viceroy. One could easily see that Lord Reading would under no circumstance look the issue straight in the face. For it went to the very root of the matter. And yet the issue had to be brought out and an answer demanded. And Mahatmaji did it in a most searching manner. He asked—If the national agitation was conducted on strictly non-violent lines, and if it steadily went forward gaining strength, without being interfered with by the Government except to check possible tendencies towards violence,—and if as the result of it all, the Government found the nationalist feeling and the nationalist will developed to a degree which left them no choice but to renounce their own autocratic will and follow the People's will, should they be prepared to welcome that happy consummation?

Such, indeed, was the full issue involved and implied in the suggested declaration of policy as contained in Mahatmaji's letter to Lord Reading. In the early days of the non-co-operation movement, Mahatma Gandhi had made the same sort of appeal to Lord Chelmsford, the immediate predecessor in office of Lord Reading. The circumstances arose in this way. Lord Chelmsford's Government had issued a *communiqué* under date November 6, 1920. At the very end of the *communiqué* there was a warning given to all concerned as to the coming application, under certain contingencies, of repressive methods by the Government of Lord Chelmsford. The warning ran thus:—“How long, with due regard to their ultimate responsibility for the public safety, the Government will be able to maintain that policy” (*i.e.*, non-repression) “will depend largely on the success which attends the efforts of the moderate citizens to check the extension of the movement and keep its dangers within bounds.” This furnished the

occasion for Mahatmaji, asking for a 'declaration of policy' on the same lines as he had suggested to Lord Reading. For writing in reference to the charges laid above against the non-co-operation movement, and specially the charge as to the "danger" involved in the movement, Mahatmaji expressed himself as follows:—"The danger here feared is evidently not of violence but of the loss of the existence of the Government. The Government are wickedly playing with the Moderates and with India. *If they mean well, let them make an irrevocable announcement in the clearest possible terms that, so long as the movement remains non-violent, they will not interfere with it, even though it demands, and may result in, complete independence.*"* The italics are mine. And further dotting the i's and crossing the t's, Mahatmaji laid bare the inwardness of the 'warning' in the following trenchant words:—"Repression is to replace reason and argument, if non-co-operation becomes effective to the extent of making it impossible for the Government to exist, whilst refusing to retrace its steps and repent of its crimes against India."

* *Young India*, 17 November, 1920.

SUMMING UP—IV.

THE GOVERNMENT PLBA ANALYSED.

The vital issue raised by Mahatma Gandhi touching the very foundations of Imperialist Governance in India, and discussed at length in the previous article, was not directly met or combated either by Lord Chelmsford or by Lord Reading. But they wanted to meet the issue by a sort of a flank attack. It was proclaimed from the house-tops by Lord Reading that theirs was a civilised form of Administration, and as such they had a duty, imposed upon all Administrations that laid claim to being civilised,—to extend the hands of protection to all law-abiding citizens under their rule. The Imperialism in India could not, therefore, be a passive spectator of any encroachment on, or infringement of, rights enjoyed by citizens living under a civilised Government. If they did so, they would be abdicating one of the primary functions of such Government.

All this was eminently fair argument. But although as argument it was fair and reasonable, still Mahatmaji wanted the public to know that it was nothing but a camouflage. It was only a pose, or an attitude adopted by Lords Chelmsford and Reading to make it appear before the outer world that they were not engaged in prosecuting any sinister or selfish purpose, anything in fact, of which they should be ashamed. They wanted to hide from the public gaze the real fact that their activities were directed towards maintaining their political hold upon a dependent Imperial possession. Therefore, the propaganda was that they were but extending the arm of protection to all law-abiding citizens living under their Imperial sway as against the insidious moves, and the violent proclivities, of the non-co-operating community.

Mahatmaji's deep-laid conviction, therefore, was that the Government's attempt at justification of their campaign of repression was at bottom insincere. The suggested

'declaration of policy' contained in his letter to Lord Reading as Viceroy makes it quite plain that Mahatmaji would not only agree to but would welcome the use of force by Government whenever or wherever there were lapses on the part of Non-co-operators from the strict path of non-violence and peaceful organisation. If, and wherever, there were evidences forthcoming of violence in the movement, it had to be put down, whether by the Government or by the Non-co-operators themselves. That was common ground. If so, Government had ample freedom of action. But what Mahatmaji wanted to guard against was a hostile propaganda kept up by the Government with the definite object of running down the movement because of its fundamental political implications. That struck at the very root of the Government of India's honesty and bonafides. And throughout Mahatmaji made of this question of the bonafides of the Government of Lord Reading a live issue.

To repeat: There was not the least objection on the part of Mahatma Gandhi to any single act by the Government which was really directed against any "violence, open, intended or veiled" (to use Mahatmaji's own words) on the part of Non-co-operators. But the vital issue was that the national agitation being an agitation to enforce the People's will as against the will of an autocratic Imperialist Government, that Government must not be allowed to justify its actions or attitude in respect of the movement by means of a hostile propaganda which at bottom was neither sincere nor truthful.

Such was the general charge laid by Mahatmaji against the Government of India during the Viceroyalty of Lord Chelmsford and of Lord Reading. But the concrete specific charges were that the Government had as a rule made it their policy to cast into prison Non-co-operators (engaged in peaceful, lawful activities) ostensibly on a charge of their participation in some form of violence, but really because they were engaged in carrying forward a political movement that struck at the roots of Imperial autocracy in India. Mahatmaji could not have made his position clearer when in addition to, and in elucidation of, the proviso "subject always to the condition of non-violence" contained in the suggested "declaration of policy" already

referred to, he preferred the following further request to Lord Reading in the concluding paragraph of his letter to him :—" I would respectfully urge you as the Head of the Government of India finally to revise your policy and set free all the non-co-operating prisoners who are convicted or under trial for non-violent activities."

Thus, every time we find Mahatmaji proclaiming his desire and his determination that the non-co-operation movement must be kept pure at any cost, and that the Government would be perfectly justified, and even welcome, in taking all steps to put down violence. But it would be a wholly different thing if for the purpose of covering up a sinister political propaganda, and all in the name of " public safety " and " the protection of law-abiding citizens," the Government should go on issuing notifications prohibiting peaceful public meetings, banning peaceful volunteer organisations and manufacturing criminal offences, and employing the whole armoury of repression, against their political antagonists. Nobody wanted Lord Reading " to abdicate " in his Excellency's own words " one of the primary functions of a civilised Government."* But what Mahatmaji felt and propounded before the world was that the object aimed at was not the maintenance of Law and Order, but the maintenance and perpetuation, if possible, of Imperial autocracy over an Imperial possession. And if such was the political objective of the Government, the charges laid against the movement and those who participated in it as workers and leaders were necessarily tainted at their very source. ' Putting down the violence ' of Non-co-operators was not, therefore, really the issue on which Mahatmaji fought against the Government; but the fight was against the false issue raised by the Government.

And this real issue was brought out and emphasised by Mahatmaji when he specifically demanded of the Government during the December negotiations of 1921 that those among the Non-co-operators who had been " unwarrantably imprisoned," that is to say, imprisoned not because of any

* *Vide* His Excellency's reply to a Moderate deputation, 21 December, 1921.

violent activities, but because of their non-violent non-co-operationist activities, should be set at liberty. If the Government of India were not sailing under false colours, if, indeed, their only objective was to keep down violence, then, undoubtedly the release of Non-co-operators engaged in non-violent activities would be an easy affair, and would at once establish the bonafides or honesty of the Government.

From the above point of view one can understand why Mahatmaji would not accept the sincerity of the Government of Lord Reading in connection with the suggested holding under the auspices of that Government of a Round Table Conference with the representatives of the people. Unless and until the Government agreed in the first instance to establish their bonafides by the release of Non-co-operators guilty of no violence, it was clear to Mahatmaji that the suggested conference with the Government would not only prove abortive but might also prove a snare by putting the leaders "on the wrong track". Therefore, specifying particular points the fulfilment of which by Government would only be possible in case the Government had made up their minds to desist raising false issues against the non-co-operation movement,—Mahatmaji laid down as follows :—

"If the Government means well, they should at once retrace steps by unconditionally withdrawing the recent notifications regarding the disbandment of peaceful volunteer organisations, and public meetings, and doing partial reparation by discharging those unwarrantably imprisoned for non-violent activities. Let them put down violence, veiled, open or intended, but we must resist with our lives this wanton and violent suppression of freedom of opinion."*

It must not be supposed that such specific and categorical demand as the above, was a casual demand by Mahatmaji, for it was repeated and repeated by him, until finally, as we have seen, in his letter to Lord Reading,

* This is taken from Telegram No. VIII from Mahatmaji, dated Sabarmati, 21 December 1921, which forms part of a series of twelve telegrams embodying the December 1921 negotiations. Vide Ch. IX Part II of this Vol.

he coupled the specific demand (for "release of non-co-operating prisoners convicted or under trial for non-violent activities,") with the general demand for a clear declaration of policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country."

To sum up: The real issue before the Government, according to Mahatmaji, was not the issue of violence *versus* non-violence, although that issue was trotted out by them off and on as the real issue. The real issue was far different. It was a political issue of first-rate or fundamental importance. But the Government had not the courage openly and unequivocally to take its stand on that issue. The result was that the Government had to manufacture a false issue, which clothed as it was in legal and constitutional phraseology, lent a charm and plausibility to it. If, on the other hand, the Government could take courage in both hands, and could declare openly and unequivocally that they must use the whole armoury of repression against the Non-co-operators not only for the purpose of putting down violence whenever and wherever they were guilty of such, but also and primarily for the purpose of retaining the hold of British Imperialism upon India, Mahatmaji could not and would not have laid the charge of insincerity against the acts of Lord Reading and his predecessor. Nor would another and more tragic consequence have followed. If the Governmental policy did not lie hid behind a smoke screen of hypocrisy, so many of the cultured and patriotic sons of India among the Moderates would never have been misled. For they were misled in two ways. They were misled as to the true inwardness of the Governmental attitude towards the Non-co-operators and of the unparalleled Governmental repression which followed as a consequence. This primary error on the part of the Moderate leaders inevitably led a subsidiary error which, however, was fraught with serious political consequences. They were misled into giving support to the Government because they believed that the real object of the Government in handling the non-co-operation movement so roughly was the maintenance and preservation of 'Law and Order,' so essential to any form of stable Government and Society, and particularly

so in the case of a country like India.' This faith of the Moderates in the Government of India suffered a check, however, when the repression rose to unparalleled heights during the Viceroyalty of Lord Reading. Their instincts rebelled, and for a time they felt it their duty to withdraw their moral support to the Government. This alteration of attitude towards the authorities, however, produced a corresponding reaction on the latter, and one can trace that from thence during all the succeeding years the Moderates have fallen from grace. Then, again, the Moderates were misled in another way. They were dead against Imperialism. So far they were at one with Mahatma Gandhi and the Non-co-operators. But where they differed from Mahatmaji was in their abiding faith in the Imperial country. They believed that the heart of Great Britain was sound, Imperialist though she was. In other words, *at heart* she was not Imperialist, whence a whole host of consequences followed. Not being Imperialist at heart the Sovereign country could be expected some day to take India into her bosom as a co-equal partner. The ideal of co-equal partnership with the Sovereign country and the feasibility of its realisation at no distant date under Imperial tutelage and as a gift from the Imperial country,—these two factors have contributed not a little to lead the Moderates captive. The faith that is in them that Great Britain is not Imperialist at heart, and is distinguishable from other Imperialist countries, has coloured their vision and given them a false perspective all through, from the effects of which they have not yet recovered. That explains why the Moderates, intensely patriotic, still threw themselves into the arms of the Imperialist Government when non-co-operation was inaugurated, and arrayed themselves in a solid phalanx against the whole movement during the entire course of its eventful career.

SUMMING UP—V.

SWARAJ THROUGH NON-VIOLENCE.

As discussed in the last preceding chapter, the main complaint of Mahatmaji was that the official justification of the unparalleled repression during Lord Reading's regime was at bottom a comouflage with a distinct political purpose. The issue which was placed before the world by the Government of India was one of the Non-co operator's violence necessitating the application of violence by Government towards a forcible suppression of the same. If that were the real issue, if indeed the real issue were one of official brute force *versus* the Non-co-operator's brute force, then, as has been amply explained, Mahatmaji would have hardly anything to complain of; although, even then, the "unparalleled" character of the repression would require further justification.

If we have read the preceding chapters to some purpose, it will have been seen in what dead earnest Mahatmaji was to keep his movement *pure*; to keep it free from the taint or even a suspicion of violence in any shape or form. Consider how he had been fighting with his own people against a premature launching of a campaign of mass civil disobedience. Consider also how much of provocation was being given to the non-co-operating workers, the target of official lawlessness, when such lawlessness was mounting higher and higher. All this shows almost to a demonstration that if Government were really sincere in their propaganda that the violence of the workers necessitated a corresponding use of violence by the Government, then the obvious course for the latter would have been to join hands with Mahatmaji in his transparently honest and determined attempt to prosecute the national agitation on lines of non-violence, and on no other. But since violent or non-violent, the movement had to be suppressed because it was hostile to Imperialism, no such joining of hands by the Government was possible.

Then, let us take into consideration the further fact that Mahatmaji was in dead earnest that Swaraj for India must never mean, as elsewhere, "an interval," to quote his own words, "of confusion, anarchy and civil strife."* The charge had been laid against his movement by a Government of India *communiqué* that "the scheme of non-co-operation if successful could only result in widespread disorder, and political chaos."† Mahatmaji's answer was that *Swaraj achieved by non-violent* means would mean nothing of the kind. It would be different if the means employed were the means of violence to which the Government were constantly resorting for political purposes. That was the answer which Mahatmaji gave. For, according to him, successful non-co-operation meant the creation of a non-violent atmosphere throughout the country and a progressive course of mass-awakening and mass-organisation through mass-activities of a non-violent character. This peaceful mass-awakening, and peaceful mass-organisation, if it could be brought about, would not spell anarchy and disorder, but far better order and peace than what obtained under a regime of forced suppression of the General Will. Therefore, declared Mahatmaji with an air of supreme confidence and conviction. "The Government must know that successful non-violent non-co-operation means an orderly destruction of the present system of Government and its *replacement* not by disorder and chaos, but by political order of the first magnitude, and protection of every legitimate interest in the country,—not excluding that of European merchants who desire to earn an honest living in India."‡

As the net result of all these discussions one is forced to accept Mahatmaji's position that in his scheme of Swaraj there was no room for "an interval of chaos and anarchy." The progressive development of the internal strength of the country leading by progressively peaceful stages towards Swaraj through the progressive disintegration of autocratic power of the political masters—such and no other

* *Vide Young India* 9th March, 1922.

† *Vide the communiqué* of the Government of India, dated 6th Nov. 1920 issued during the Viceroyalty of Lord Chelmsford.

‡ *Young India*, 17 Nov. 1920.

is the objective Mahatmaji had in view when he pleaded for the attainment of Swaraj by non-violent methods. The position is beautifully shadowed forth in the following lines:—"Swaraj by non-violence must be a progressively peaceful revolution such that the transference of power from a close corporation to the people's representatives will be as natural as dropping of a fully ripe fruit from a well-nurtured tree. Swaraj by non-violent means can never mean an interval of chaos and anarchy."*

Such being the nature of Mahatmaji's methods for winning Swaraj, could he, as a practical leader of a giant political movement that for a time shook the foundations of Imperial supremacy over India, be held to have been ignorantly marching towards a catastrophic disaster? Was he not measuring every single step he took in the light of the principle of non-violence which he placed before himself and the country as the sheet-anchor of the whole movement. What right had Lord Chelmsford or Lord Reading, then to assume that Mahatmaji was heading towards anarchy and disaster? Of course, the idea was welcome to them as giving them a handle to use all weapons in their repressive armoury, and, if possible, give the movement a quibus? Did it not lie in their power, assuming that their apprehensions were genuine, to help a confirmed believer in non-violence like Mahatmaji to keep the movement straight, so that no such disastrous consequences as they feared might follow? Or, was it to be taken for granted that Imperial autocracy and governance was the only cure for India's chronic ills, and the preservation of Law and Order the only specific? And therefore, the undermining of such autocracy by non-co-operation even in a peaceful manner meant ultimate confusion and political disintegration all through.

To repeat, assuming that the apprehensions of the protagonists of Imperialism in India were perfectly genuine, instead of being the camouflage that they were, the duty that lay before them was to devise means as to how the spectre of coming anarchy and chaos could be laid at rest without thinking of the drastic step of crushing the movement out of existence. That Lord Chelmsford and Lord

* *Young India*, 9th March, 1922.

Reading visualised only the latter alternative instead of the former, is clear evidence of a sinister purpose. Their object was not to promote the spirit of non-violence among the workers and leaders, where the latter did not come up to the mark, and so regulate the movement along right lines. But their object was to proclaim the coming era of chaos and confusion as the result of successful non-co-operation, and so raise a scare. And this was to be done in the interests of Imperialist dominance, and for the purpose of broadcasting to the world the need of repression clothed in an attractive garment, the garment of Law and Order.

For these latter were held forth by the protagonists of Imperialism as the essential attributes of every civilised Administration, not coming to distinguish between an Administration which was the creation and expression of the National Will; or whether it was an incubus strangling such Will.

Mahatmaji next turns to another question. If the Government of India could not go so far as to help the growth of non-violence by way of co-operating with Mahatmaji in the manner indicated, he thought that he could very well appeal to the Government at least not to stand in the way of the movement in its attempt at a gradual peaceful development of Public Opinion, that is to say, of the General Will. In other words, if the Government could not help, let it not at least hinder the movement. Mahatmaji, therefore, in his 'Letter' of 1st February, 1922 asked Lord Reading—to remain "neutral" if possible, interfering only when there was any real 'violence' or chance of real violence; but never on any manufactured item of violence. So long as there was this "strictest neutrality" not departed from by the Government of Lord Reading, there was no need or possibility for an immediate fight with Imperial autocracy. Although the chances in Mahatmaji's favour were small, still in his letter of 1st February, 1922 he thought fit to put forth his suggestion in a guarded way, as to a new orientation of policy. The idea suggested was that Lord Reading's Government should remain "neutral and thus allow public opinion to ripen and have its full effect." The suggestion was developed by Mahatmaji in the same letter towards its end. "If the Government remained

neutral, then the country will be advised to be engaged in further moulding public opinion without violent restraint from either side, and will trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands." On the other hand, if and when the suggested "neutrality" was violated, then the only alternative before the country would be to engage in a fight with the Government by means of "civil" *i.e.*, peaceful resistance to their autocratic will. The language used by Mahatmaji was as follows:—"Aggressive civil disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strict neutrality or refuses to yield to clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India."

The attitude of "neutrality" for which Mahatmaji pleaded was ignored by the Government of Lord Reading, entrenched as it was behind bayonets and the barbed wire entanglements of constitutional maxims and constitutional procedure bearing on the all-important question of Law and Order. All the imperative duties of a civilised Administration, albeit Imperialist and irremovable by the nationals of this country; and all the rights, legal and other appertaining to an Imperialist Government, solely because it was "a Government established by Law" of Imperial manufacture, and not of national make; all this legal and constitutional wisdom was placarded by the Government of Lord Reading to explain and defend a policy of repression and suppression of the national movement. The appeal for the observance of 'neutrality' fell on deaf or unheeding ears.

Mahatmaji, a confirmed believer in the doctrine of winning over opponents as the only safe and sure way of establishing a stable order of relationship with them, did not therefore omit to place before Lord Reading the suggested policy of "neutrality" as appropriate for his Excellency's Government. That was one consideration. But there was also the other consideration that the weapon of *Satyagraha* has to be wielded only when all other peaceful attempts at remedy have been tried and have failed. In other words, all the avenues of appeal and persuasion had in the first instance to be explored before Mahatmaji could feel justified to enter on a final trial of strength with the Government

in the name of Truth. For in that way could Mahatmaji vindicate the application of the title of Satyagraha to a campaign of aggressive mass civil disobedience. There was, therefore, the need for a final effort by Mahatmaji, in the direction of helping the Viceroy to come to a right and proper decision as to his duties towards the non-co-operation movement. The suggestion of a "policy of neutrality" for adoption by Government of Lord Reading was one such and final effort.

And yet at the same time if this "policy of neutrality" had been adopted by Lord Reading, the need for a premature launching of a campaign of civil resistance at Bardoli could have been obviated. This consideration was also present in Mahatmaji's mind. For, as we have seen, he wrote as follows to Lord Reading :—

"Had the Government's policy remained neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the adoption of civil disobedience till the Congress had obtained fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater discipline among the millions of its adherents." In his rejoinder, dated 7th February, 1922, to the Government of India communique, Mahatmaji expressed himself quite frankly as follows :—"I freely recognise that unless India becomes saturated with the spirit of non-violence and generates disciplined strength that can fully come from non-violence, she cannot enforce her demands. And it is for that reason that I now consider that the first thing for the people to do is to secure a reversal of this mad repression and then to concentrate upon more complete organisation and more construction." And therefore,— "What I now ask against the total suspension of civil disobedience of an aggressive character is merely the stoppage of ruthless repression, the release of prisoners convicted under it and a clear declaration of policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country."

Mahatmaji staked his all on this issue of violence *versus* non-violence. He had sent in his 'ultimatum' to Lord Reading that he was about to embark on his campaign of

aggressive mass civil disobedience at Bardoli, one remote corner of the Western Presidency. And yet we find that as soon as he had read of an 'outbreak of an aggravated type of mob violence at Chauri Chaura in far away Gorakhpur in the north-eastern corner of the country, he gave the signal for an immediate halt to his advancing army, much to the disappointment, chagrin and even resentment of some of his most beloved and trusted co-workers and lieutenants. For, in Mahatmaji's own pointed language used in another and a similar connection,—“If I can have nothing to do with the organised violence of the Government, I can have less to do with the unorganised violence of the people. I would prefer to be crushed between the two.”*

Mahatmaji has only called a 'Halt.' He remains as undaunted as ever. The war of *Satyagraha* to achieve Swaraj is not to be abandoned. The 'Halt' means only a suspension of aggressive mass civil resistance. It is a state of abeyance in the struggle implying a fresh course of preparations. And if the preparations go on, as Mahatmaji hopes they will, although they may be prolonged, then the non-violent mass-awakening that may eventually issue may even render mass civil disobedience wholly superfluous. In that way, Mahatmaji declares, and after taking a full survey of the Chauri Chaura tragedy,—that “we can establish full Swaraj, and redress the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs, without a single person having to offer civil disobedience.”†

* *Young India* 24 Nov. 1921.

† *Vide* “The Crime of Chauri Chaura : *Young India* 16 February 1922.

PART VIII

PROSPECT AND RETROSPECT—I.

Two days after conviction,* as stated in a previous chapter, Mahatma Gandhi was spirited away from Sabarmati gaol at dead of night to some unknown destination to the dismay, anxiety, and even agony not only of those whom he had left behind in his Ashram, but of the vast body of his countrymen who had now installed him in their hearts as their chosen chief and leader. A sentence of six years' imprisonment had been passed by the Session's Court on Mahatmaji, and had been received by him in open Court to be "as light as any Judge could inflict on me." But to the world outside, a period of six years was a large slice of a man's life, and from the point of view of immediate Indian politics of the time it was a slice big with potentialities of no small consequence. Mahatmaji's leadership having gone for those long, long years, the question of a fresh, independent lead might be raised. And it would be no wonder if it was raised by some of his greater lieutenants, who although they had accepted Mahatmaji's generalship might not feel quite competent to steer with sufficient conviction of heart an All-India political movement of the novel type inaugurated by Mahatmaji. That was the immediate situation; and so, many began to entertain misgivings as to whether, after all when Mahatmaji returned to them after having served out his term, he would find the country forging ahead along those definite lines of advance, which he had chalked out for it. Or in the alternative, the question was whether he would find the country confused, bewildered and groping, or perchance insensibly slipping back into the old grooves of political subserviency, out of which Mahatmaji had lifted it. Whether or not, in fact, the country should be able to stand on its own feet, and keep a firm grip on the political leadership which Mahatmaji had left as a legacy to it, such was the eager questioning which could be heard from many a mouth, and this especially in view of the fact that many of the stalwarts had yielded to him not out of conviction, but

as a matter of policy, or on account of the superior magnetic personality of Mahatmaji. The result, however, showed that although during his absence there was no actual surrender to the Government, yet there was a considerable weakening of attitude, the country being no longer able to present a united front to the political authorities. For, there were evidences of a split among the non-co-operating leaders themselves, and this split assumed a formidable shape, and became an accomplished fact, only a few months after Mahatmaji's disappearance from our midst.

Thus, the growth of a new party which wanted to go back upon Mahatmaji's programme introduced a new factor in Indian politics. It was not exactly on the lines of the old mendicant type of agitation; but the mere obstructionist tactics in the Legislatures in which the new party indulged could not and did not make for positive internal strength in the country, which it was the aim of Mahatma Gandhi to develop. There was a sort of confused effort on the part of the political leaders to make a political impression on the Government by the power of their votes in the Legislatures, now holding out the olive branch to it, now holding it back, as circumstances dictated. It was a sort of a hide-and-seek game in which the political leaders now thought fit to engage themselves, feeling that Swaraj could be attained as well by negotiation in the Legislatures as by declaring open war in the country, as contemplated in Mahatmaji's programme of non-violent non-co-operation. The belief of the stalwarts of the new party was that Mahatmaji had omitted to explore all the avenues of political strategy which the newly formed Legislatures had opened out, and that the door of negotiation with the Government on "honourable terms" could yet be forced open by obstructionist strategy in the Legislatures.

It was clear almost from the very first that the leaders by entering the Legislatures, and going back into the Law Courts, had definitely lost the political lead which Mahatmaji had bequeathed to them,—and which by the very act of such entrance into the Councils passed on to the Government. The Legislatures now became the arena for political fights—an arena, be it noted, which was the choice of the Government. And that arena, was well-barricaded, well-

fortified, well-entrenched and provided with all the legal and other equipments which up-to-date Imperialistic science could devise to avert or ward off any possible onslaughts by the representatives of a subject people.

The result was that in the country at large, which had been Mahatmaji's venue for giving battle to the Imperialist Government,—the flag of war was no longer kept unfurled in any real sense of the word. The resounding battle cry in the country which had been heard during the fateful months and years of 1920-1922 was no longer heard. The leadership in the fight had insensibly passed away from the masses to the handful of educated leaders gathered together under the protecting wings of the Government in Council Chambers and engaged with all possible gusto in debating and discussing and voting on matters of state as if they were members of a Sovereign National Assembly. The fact of the matter was that having voluntarily given up the political lead which Mahatmaji had bequeathed to them, they had taken to the easier task of organising voters and parties and coalitions in Indian Parliaments so-called, than organising the masses in the wider arena of the country in a determined attempt to dislodge the bureaucracy from its strong-holds of power. The political classes had evidently lost sight of the cardinal fact that they had an obvious advantage, when under Mahatmaji's generalship they had made the country their chosen arena for giving battle to entrenched Imperialism in India.

The fight for freedom must always be carried on in the country, and the energies of the masses harnessed to the task. But if the intelligentsia left the *country* for the Councils, no special blame could or should attach to them. For their whole lives had been passed in Council Halls,—or in Law Courts or in state-controlled colleges and Universities and the type of political agitation embodied in a peaceful organisation of the masses and holding them in readiness to repel any invasion of their rights by an Imperialist bureaucracy, was one to which they had never set their hands in dead earnest except, of course, during the short spell of a year or two under Mahatmaji's generalship. Not only was there this original handicap from which they suffered; but there was another handicap of a far more

serious nature. The intelligentsia had^{*} never been unconnected with the Government. They had relations with the Government and these stood in their way. They have been in the language of Mahatmaji "the arm of Government authority."^{*} For they have taken their full share in buttressing up by voluntary as well as paid services the whole fabric of British Indian Administration. Mahatmaji, therefore, in another place was compelled to declare, "for me they (the privileged classes) are the Government."[†] Therefore, in Mahatmaji's view the western educated classes could easily win the battle of freedom both for themselves and the country at large, (i.e. the exploited masses), if they but chose to withdraw themselves from their work of maintaining and perfecting the Governmental machinery. For without their services, paid or unpaid, the whole machinery would come to a stop for want of fuel. Then there are also other considerations which stood in the way of the intelligentsia leading a mass movement of the kind contemplated by Mahatmaji; if and so long as they did not surrender the privileged position which they enjoyed by association with the Government. In Mahatmaji's eyes such surrender or withdrawal by them of the services voluntarily rendered by them to Government could alone make them one with the people and instal them in a position of true leadership over them. So long, therefore, as they remained a class apart in direct connection with the Government, and drawing all the profits and emoluments incidental to such connection, the intelligentsia held a dubious position in the body politic, and laid themselves open to Governmental influence and exploitation. Mahatmaji just hints at this aspect of the matter when he says:—"As the latter" (members of the so-called liberal professions) "have represented the arm of authority, we have been awed by them and to that extent they have accustomed us to think that we can satisfy our wants only through the Government."[‡] In order, therefore, to make the educated classes true leaders of the people, Mahatmaji from the very first had declared himself in favour of the classes withdrawing

* "*Young India*" for 17th April, 1924.

† "*Young India*" for 8th December, 1921.

‡ "*Young India*" 17th April, 1924.

themselves from all association with the Government in the Councils, Law Courts, Government Colleges, Schools and Universities and similar other marks of voluntary official relations in the scheme of the Administration of the country. That was, indeed, the basis of the fourfold boycott enunciated in the Calcutta and Nagpur Congresses of 1920.

I have mentioned the essential disabilities from which the intelligentsia suffered and the way in which Mahatmaji sought to combat them. It was clear that the conduct of a mass movement of the non-co-operation type under their leadership meant and involved a radical transformation of moral and mental outlook, or, in the language of Mahatmaji,—a real change of heart. Mahatmaji had pinned his faith on such a change as inevitable, because he had felt that the humiliations of the Punjab atrocities, the enormity of the Khilafat betrayal and the anxious and determined demand for full self-Government which he had seen reflected on every educated countenance were enough to transform the hearts of the privileged classes and create a great moral and spiritual awakening among them. There was nothing inherently wrong or improbable in such hope and expectation cherished by Mahatmaji. But the fact was that the outlook of the privileged classes had not up till then undergone that radical transformation which Mahatmaji demanded, and which would have enabled them to carry out the great movement of non-co-operation during the period of Mahatmaji's enforced absence. The classes at the time did not see their way to give up the privileged position which had naturally come to them by their voluntary association with the Government. In other words, the process of organic growth which would have prepared them at the time to renounce their position of vantage as a class apart, enjoying all the privileges of Governmental connection had not yet been completed. But the consummation which Mahatmaji's heart craved would come as a part of natural political evolution, and it would come as assuredly as night follows day. But for the moment, it was but partial, and nobody was to blame.

PROSPECT AND RETROSPECT—II.

Thus, the fight for Swaraj after Mahatmaji's disappearance behind prison-walls changed its venue. It was transferred from the health-giving atmosphere of the open country into the stuffy, impure atmosphere of Legislative Chambers. It was strongly hoped that although a handful, often split up into parties and factions, each standing up for its own dignity, the elected Legislators would be able to make their mark there. It was strongly hoped, again, that by means only of obstructionist pressure and Parliamentary tactics, they would be in a position to force open the door of negotiation with the latter for an equal status with self-governing Dominions. The implication was that the masses would no longer be required to put forth their strength and organise themselves in ten thousand and one ways open to them to wage a determined battle on their own account against exploitation and emasculation. They had but to choose the best representatives at the polls from among the intelligentsia, and it was for these latter to fight for the masses the battle of freedom in Council Halls, and force the Imperialist Government to come to terms with them. The crux of the whole question thus resolved itself into something like this: should the masses have no direct part or lot in giving battle to the Government? "Should the spinner, the weaver, the farmer, the artisan, the trader have the right to say that they have as much claim to shape the destiny of their country as the members of the so-called liberal professions"?* Should the masses have not the right to declare that their whole soul rebelled against being made to play second fiddle to the classes who without organising strength in the country pinned their faith solely on the results of 'Divisions' in the Council lobbies?

The fact of the matter was that Indian politicians had inherited a sort of tradition that politics and political

* Vide "*Young India*" for 17th April, 1924.

agitation were a business to be managed by the western-educated classes alone, standing as intermediaries between the Government and the people. They are, therefore, specially referred to by the Government as the "politically-minded classes," implying that the rest of their countrymen were not so politically-minded. Political agitation outside the Council Chambers, therefore, centred on efforts of the educated classes to plead with the Government or enter protests against Governmental measures ostensibly in the name of the people as their representatives and extorting what "concessions" they could by creating a growing public opinion in favour of such concessions. This "public opinion," however, in the last analysis meant and implied not the General Will of the people, but only the public opinion as prevailing among the educated classes themselves. That the masses have a part, and a determining or even a decisive part to play in the working out of their own political salvation is a view of the matter that had hardly penetrated the minds and feelings of the intelligentsia. The result was that practically nothing had been done towards the awakening of the political consciousness of the general body of the people until Mahatma Gandhi entered the Indian political arena.

For the first few years after his final return from South Africa in 1915, Mahatmaji was engaged in reconnoitring the whole field of Indian politics truly so-called, by seeking to place himself in intimate touch with the masses and seeking also by the now well-known method of Satyagraha, to redeem special concrete grievances from which they had been suffering. This went on for some time until the inauguration of the Rowlatt Bill and the placing of it on the Indian Statute Book in the teeth of an All-India protest and in the teeth also of the vehement opposition of all the great Nationalist and Moderate leaders in the Imperial Legislative Council; the perpetration of the Punjab atrocities and the deep humiliation and degradation of Indian manhood and womanhood that it involved; the way also in which the whole matter was sought to be hushed up in the first instance, and then minimised or whitewashed by the Hunter Committee, the Government of India, the Imperial Government and not the least by the British

Houses of Parliament; and lastly, the egregious failure of the Moderate Party pinning their faith on constitutional procedure, to effect a reversal of the Imperial policy, all these in their cumulative effect gave Mahatmaji a chance to make himself felt. It was in this critical posture of the country's affairs that Mahatmaji found his opportunity to launch on a comprehensive scale a scheme of political education and agitation not confined exclusively to the western-educated section of the Indian population. It was at this stage of the history of Indian politics that Mahatmaji felt that it was possible for him to enter on a campaign of rousing the political consciousness of the masses to the state of humiliation and degradation into which the country had fallen.

The failure of the orthodox Moderate, "Constitutional" method of merely formulating Indian political grievances and the focussing thereon of Indian public opinion—the opinion, namely, of the educated classes—was writ large on the face of the country, especially in the years 1919-1920. It was again this failure to make the Government amenable to the will of the intelligentsia working through the Indian National Congress that discredited the Congress itself, as then conducted, and proclaimed it as a political instrument of hardly any consequence. Mahatmaji now came out with the slogan that the task of the political enfranchisement of the masses must be undertaken by the masses themselves, and not be left into the hands of the classes. Further, if the intelligentsia must truly lead the masses as their very own, they must renounce the privileged position which they had been hitherto enjoying as associates and co-workers with the Government in the task of Administration and exploitation. I would here supplement previous relevant quotations on the subject from Mahatmaji's writings with the following short extract from Mahatmaji's "Written Statement" before the Sessions Court at Almedabad on 18th March, 1922 on the eve of his conviction and imprisonment. He is here referring to the "town-dwellers" as including not only the intelligentsia who congregate in the towns and pursue their callings, but he is referring also to the trading and commercial classes who are hangers-on to the British import and export trade. Mahatmaji declares

with infinite pathos,—“Little do ‘town-dwellers’ know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get to do the work of the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses.” To the same purpose is the following statement by Lala Lajpat Rai in an article in “The Nation” (U. S. A.) published in December 1921, when the ‘non-co-operation movement’ was at its height:—“The ‘higher’ and ‘respectable’ classes of the intelligentsia who have thrown themselves on the side of the Government are opposed to Mahatma Gandhi’s non-co-operation programme because it would reduce them to positions of comparative poverty and nothingness. The British in India have accepted these intelligentsia as subordinate partners in their business of exploitation.”*

Therefore, declared Mahatmaji that to be true leaders in a mass movement which would help to win the battle of Swaraj, the intelligentsia must non-co-operate with the Imperialist Government in Legislatures, in Law Courts, in State-controlled Universities and Colleges, and in official functions, etc., and claim the honoured privilege of standing shoulder to shoulder in a spirit of comradeship with the vast body of the people as non-violent soldiers of a common cause. They must cease to remain apart playing the part of dignified political leaders enjoying, to quote Mahatmaji’s words, a privileged position in the “voluntary branch of the Administration.” In other words, the Indian National Congress must no longer constitute the political arena of the intelligentsia only, but must be converted into an instrument of effective political warfare where only those could meet among the intelligentsia who had renounced Governmental association and lead, along with those also who would directly represent the general body of the people. This was a revolutionary proposal; yet it was carried out at a special session of the Congress in September 1920, in the teeth of vehement and strenuous opposition on the part of some of the greater stalwarts among the intelligentsia. Thus, the Congress came in due course to be the Congress

* *Vide* pp. 231-232 of Miss Blanche Watson’s compilation entitled “Gandhi and Non-violent Resistance” (Ganesh & Co., Madras 1923) which reproduces the article in full.

of the masses, and of such among the classes as would throw in their lot with the masses.

The story of the Congress under the new regime and the story of the mass-awakening and mass-movement during this period of ascendancy of the non-co-operation movement under the undisputed leadership of Mahatma Gandhi has been described at some length in this and the preceding volume. But during the comparatively short spell of Mahatmaji's incarceration, which did not extend to two years in full,* the old tradition of the Congress as the political organ of the intellectual classes, as contra-distinguished from the masses, was found reasserting itself with greater and greater sway. The result was that Mahatma Gandhi after his release found the situation distinctly unfavourable to the continuance of the non-co-operation programme. After some effort to stem the rising tide of reaction with a view to harnessing it for purposes of a mass-movement, he thought fit to allow the tide to run its course without let or hindrance. And so at the Belgaum Congress of December 1924, over which Mahatmaji himself presided, he suspended his whole programme of the fourfold boycott of non-co-operation as enunciated and carried forward under his leadership by the Calcutta, Nagpur and Ahmedabad Congresses. The only boycott that he retained, and without which he could not have retained his connection with the Congress, was the boycott of foreign cloth. Mahatmaji could have, if he chose, carried his programme at the Congress itself by a majority of votes; as he did, in fact, at the June 1924 session of the All-India Congress Committee at Ahmedabad. But he did not choose to do it. The fact of the matter was, that he had in the meantime developed a sense of non-violence which prevented him from forcing upon an unwilling minority any measure or programme sanctioned only by a majority of votes, whether in the Congress or in its Central Executive, the All-India Congress Committee, or in the other executives in the Provinces and the Districts. It would be in

* Mahatmaji was convicted and sentenced to a term of six years' imprisonment on March 18, 1922 and released at 8 A.M. on 5th Feb., 1924 at the Sassoon Hospital, Poona, where he had been transferred from the Yerowada gaol for an operation for appendicitis.

his opinion an act of violence if the majority were to force down the throats of an unwilling minority any programme of work, however justified; or however desirable in the interests of the country at large. The ultimate interests of the country according to him would be far better served if the country could wait till the minority could be won over by the power of moral influence exercised by the majority. And this moral influence, said Mahatmaji, could be best exerted by an effective demonstration of the faith of the majority in their own programme of work through their activities in their individual capacities, while the Congress lead followed another course. So Mahatmaji from this new angle of vision forswore the idea of leading the Congress or its executive by the power of a majority.

Then, there was another consideration which to Mahatmaji made a weighty appeal. The dissenting minority that was arrayed against him represented the hopes and faith of an intelligentsia who fully believed in their power to wrest power from the Government while fighting the Government under their wings inside the Council Chambers. They were Parliamentarians, and believed in Parliamentary tactics. This strong and determined faith of the dissenting minority, however erroneous, appealed also to Mahatmaji as a factor in the situation, which should not be slurred over or lightly set aside. If the opposition were a mere factional opposition, the strength of Mahatmaji's majority might have been brought to bear upon the situation without much compunction. But if as here, the opposition was based upon a strenuous faith in the cause, the spirit of non-violence dictated that it should not be suppressed by sheer voting power. Such suppression, according to Mahatmaji, although sanctioned by Parliamentary or democratic procedure would in no way help to win over opponents to his cause, or enable them to see the error of their ways. In this way, the new Party preparing for a fight with the Government in the Reformed Legislatures found their way unexpectedly made smooth by this particular interpretation of non-violence in its application to questions of democratic procedure. Nor did Mahatmaji seek to explain at length to the country at large this revolution in his mentality, which at the time puzzled and

perplexed not a few, not excluding some even of his most trusted and devoted followers. The Council Party among Congressmen, however, saw in this attitude of Mahatmaji only an act of politic surrender, or of homage to their rising power. But the fact remained that but for the new aspect in which Mahatmaji viewed the question of majority *versus* minority, a born fighter like him would never have felt called upon to cry a sudden halt to his advancing army. For looked at from the ordinary point of view, the halt was wholly premature.

To sum up: The old tradition of the intellectual classes as the sole exponents of the Swaraj idea, and the sole fighters in the Swaraj cause, which had been laid to rest for a time during the years 1920-1922 reasserted itself but in a new and attractive garb, that of unmitigated resistance to authority in the different Legislatures throughout the country. And it reasserted itself with so much strength of faith and determination of purpose that Mahatmaji felt that the tradition in its new orientation should be respected, and its exponents given the opportunities of work they demanded without opposition from himself and his party of boycotters. As already hinted, according to Mahatmaji, while preserving the attitude of non-co-operation with the new Council party, it was up to the boycotting non-co-operationists, by the silent demonstration of their faith in their work done in the country, to win back the non-boycotting educated classes to the view that the hope of wresting Swaraj lay elsewhere than in the Council Chambers. And lastly, Mahatmaji saw that the condition of success of the non-co-operation movement was that the country must present a united front to the Government. A split in the Congress Camp, would have been a sort of a civil war among Congressmen, which would have only helped to strengthen the hands of an autocratic Imperialist Government. The situation from Mahatmaji's point of view requires, however, to be further analysed. Mahatmaji after his release had not immediately come to the decision about the suspension of the boycotts. He had been hoping in the first instance to preserve intact the character of the Congress Executives, as distinguished from the Congress, as it had assumed since the

inauguration of 'the non-violent non-co-operation movement, and during the period of his undisputed leadership. This was the position for which he worked for a time. But ultimately for reasons and considerations already given at some length he resiled even from this position. The result was the suspension at the Belgaum Congress (1924) of the fourfold boycott in its character as a programme sanctioned and authorised by the National Congress. The full implications of that suspension, however, needs to be brought out. The authority of the Congress was taken away from the boycotts and those who had been observing the boycotts only because of their deference to the authority of Congress as a national organisation, and not out of any real faith in them, obtained their absolution. Those, on the other hand, who notwithstanding the suspension retained their faith in the boycotts on grounds of their intrinsic merit as political weapons could of course in their individual capacities still pursue the path of the boycotts without let or hindrance from either the Congress or the non-boycotting Congressmen. Mahatmaji felt that it was these non-co-operators who stood for the boycotts without any extraneous prop, *e.g.*, a mandate from the Congress, who naturally would be best fitted to be the pioneers of a new mass-movement in the country. In Mahatmaji's view, no preparatory work leading to a mass-awakening and culminating in a mass-movement was possible, if and so long as the workers hung on to Governmental association and connection as essential to their continued political existence, or to their existence as a separate privileged class or community. Therefore, from Mahatmaji's point of view, it was more than needful that there should be a clear line of demarcation between those on the one hand who would concentrate on work in the country for purposes of a political mass-awakening for wresting Swaraj;—and those, on the other, who would retain their voluntary connection with the Government and the privileged position accruing therefrom, and yet hope to win Swaraj by their efforts in the Legislatures.

That was the rock-bottom fact about the suspension of the non-co-operation movement at Belgaum, apart from

the other considerations I have noted. * As the result of the suspension, the numerical strength of the non-co-operators went down considerably. On the other hand, there was no small accession of strength from the point of view of the quality of workers and of unity of purpose resulting in the creation of a compact, homogeneous party of members without any sort of mental reservation. In this way, the beginnings of a mass-movement that would not suffer from political backslidings or political repercussions were definitely for the first time assured. Lastly, Mahatmaji strongly held to the belief that those who had lost their faith in the boycotts and desired to enter Legislative bodies and the other institutions which he had wanted them to boycott needed to go through a process of futile, if protracted, effort with a view to that transformation of outlook which was so essential to a thorough-going faith in the fourfold boycott. This view of the matter was emphasised by Mahatmaji shortly after his release.* "After having" said he, "discussed with the Swarajist friends the vexed question of entry into the Legislative Assembly and the Councils by Congressmen, I am sorry to have to say that I have not been able to see eye to eye with the Swarajists. Nor is the difference between them and myself one of mere detail. There is an honest and fundamental difference. I say that to be out of the Legislative bodies is far more advantageous to the country than to be in them. I have however failed to convince my Swarajist friends. They are, many of them, amongst the ablest, most experienced and honest patriots. They have not entered the Legislative bodies without full deliberation, and they must not be expected to retire from the position until experience has convinced them of the futility of their method. If the work of the Swarajists prospers and the country benefits, such an ocular demonstration cannot but convince honest sceptics like me of our error, and I know the Swarajists to be patriotic enough to retrace their steps when experience has disillusioned them."

As we have seen, Mahatmaji's faith in the boycotts did not abate even by a jot by reason of the defection.

* *Vide* a statement issued to the Press by Mahatma Gandhi on 23 May, 1924.

"I believe implicitly in the full and undiluted non-co-operation programme as passed by the Congress, and no other."* This declaration of faith was made in the columns of "Young India" shortly after his release, and he has not only not resiled from it, but he has reiterated it often and often. He retained also his full faith in making the Congress the meeting ground of all shades of political opinion and thought. But the other view for which he equally contended was that the Congress executives must exclusively be under the charge of those who believed in the programme of work as laid down by the Congress. Therefore, as long as the Congress laid down the programme of the boycotts, Mahatmaji strongly demanded the exclusion from the Congress executive of that section of the educated classes who would not renounce voluntary Governmental association, and the position of vantage and privilege which such association gave them. He has expounded this view of the matter in bold uncompromising terms, as will be seen from the following somewhat lengthy extract from "Young India":—

"I hold the boycott of titles, etc., to be an absolutely integral part of the Congress. The boycott has two objects: First, to persuade those who hold titles, etc., to give them up. Secondly, to keep the Congress pure from the influence of the institutions boycotted. If the first had been immediately successful, we should have attained our goal at once. But the second is equally necessary, if we are ever to reach our goal through the programme of non-violent non-co-operation. For me the boycott is national, so long as the National Congress enforces it in its own organisation. It cannot undermine the influence, the glamour, and the prestige of Government institutions, if it cannot be run without the presence in it, as administrators, of the title-holders, lawyers, schoolmasters and councillors who represent, as it were, the voluntary branch of the Government Administration. The idea running behind the programme of non-co-operation was that if we could honestly, non-violently, and successfully work the Congress organisation without such influence, and nay, even in spite

* "Young India" for 29th May, 1924.

of it, that fact by itself would be enough to give us Swaraj. It follows, therefore, that the executive organisation of the Congress must not contain titled persons, Government school masters, practising lawyers and members of legislative bodies, and persons who use foreign cloth or cloth manufactured even in our mills, and those who deal in such cloth. Such persons can become Congressmen; but cannot and should not become members of Congress executive organisation. The All-India Congress Committee and all the local executive committees should contain only those members who whole-heartedly believe in, and are prepared to carry out, the Congress policy. The idea that all opinions should be expressed on these bodies must be abandoned if the executive committees are to become bodies for the purpose of carrying out the Congress policy for the time being. I would, therefore, urge that those who do not believe in the five boycotts, and non-violence, and truthfulness should resign from the Congress executive bodies."*

* "Young India" May 29, 1924.

PROSPECT AND RETROSPECT—III.

We have seen that with the suspension of the boycotts, the way was made smooth for the non-boycotting section of the intelligentsia to revert to the old tradition of the Congress and the Congress executives as the political organ of the intellectual classes. Secondly, we have seen that the venue of the political fight for Swaraj was transferred from the country to the Legislatures. The idea of awakening the masses to a sense of their right to fight the battle of Swaraj on their own account, and thus of creating a non-violent mass-movement to wrest Swaraj from the unwilling hands of an Imperialist Government and bureaucracy receded into the background, though the ideal was not permanently abandoned.

The deeper significance, however, of Mahatmaji's pronouncement that the non-boycotting intelligentsia, because of their being deeply committed to the task of maintaining and consolidating the machinery of Government Administration, were not the proper parties and instruments to lead the masses to a successful issue, received but scant recognition at the hands of the educated classes concerned. They did not give full thought to the conundrum which Mahatmaji put before them; and the conundrum was that the two things could not go together. You cannot remain associated with the Government and the Administration through their recognised institutions, and yet aspire to lead the masses and ensue a mass-awakening. The mentality of a true leader of the masses, according to Mahatmaji, is something wholly and fundamentally different from the mentality that would seek to enter the Legislatures, the Law-Courts and the State-controlled Colleges and Universities or participate in official functions. From the outside and from your privileged position, you could hardly hope, said Mahatmaji, to make an impression upon the masses, so as to make them feel that your interests and theirs coincided, or that there was a common unity of purpose. The truth of this pro-

position, evident as it is, was far from being realised by the non-boycotting section of the intelligentsia. They yet hoped to reconcile their privileged position as voluntary associates and co-workers of the Government with their ambition to be the leaders of the people at large.

But if this was so, the logic of facts, as the political situation under the new conditions of legislative activities went on developing, became more and more insistent and challenging. As the years rolled on, the futility of political efforts conducted in and through the Councils became more and more apparent. Mahatmaji was full of expectation that the Council Party among Congressmen who had pinned their faith on their success in the 'Division' lobbies would naturally feel inclined to withdraw from the Legislatures, because of the increasing futility of their efforts. And further he was hoping that they would feel also the need of reverting to their old position as thoroughgoing non-co-operators. He was hoping that in the end they would be drawn, as of old, to throw in their lot with the masses with a view to create and lead a non-violent mass-movement. But Mahatmaji had not counted on a new factor in the situation which weighed heavily in the scales. It was the spirit of Parliamentaryism, which had been developing and making havoc among the non-boycotters. For although the futility of political agitation in and through the Legislatures was becoming increasingly evident, Parliamentaryism and Parliamentary tactics had already acquired a grip over the classes concerned and was becoming almost a fascination. For Parliamentaryism as a political method, however unsuitable for subject peoples in circumstances of their political dependence, is nevertheless fostered by intellectualism. And the intellectual classes find themselves in their element when offered the opportunity of measuring their strength with their political masters in an arena which gives scope for Parliamentary tactics and for application of Parliamentary methods of warfare. The intelligentsia of all countries, free or unfree, therefore, are naturally drawn towards Parliamentaryism. This constitutional limitation or defect from which the intellectual classes of all countries, self-governing or dependent, have to suffer, might become, however, a dangerous malady

in the case of a dependent country where political leaders are drawn from the intelligentsia. For Parliamentaryism for them connotes their leaving the true field of work, work in the country such as would ensure a mass-awakening. Furthermore, what might be originally a natural predilection for Parliamentaryism in the case of the intellectual classes of this country might soon develop into a masterful passion through continual association with the higher official hierarchy on terms of a so-called equality in the arena of the Reformed Legislatures. For in these Legislatures created under the new Government of India Act and under the Rules framed thereunder, the forms of Parliamentary procedure are observed; and we find also that these Legislatures themselves are, often officially and non-officially, broadcasted as Indian Parliaments. Lastly, this mentality of Parliamentaryism is in no way undone or undermined, but on the other hand strengthened and aggravated by the association of the intellectual classes with the Law Courts, the State-controlled Universities and Colleges, the Durbars, the Levees and other Governmental functions. The upshot of all this is that the Parliamentary mentality and the consequent fascination for the Legislative Councils and the Legislative Assembly would persist in spite of increasing futility of political work and agitation conducted in and through these Legislatures.

It must be admitted, however, that although the Parliamentary mentality born of intellectualism and fostered by the atmosphere of the Legislative bodies was a strong obstacle in the way of the intelligentsia, their spirit of patriotism rebelled against the prospect of an ever-increasing futility of their legislative efforts. In the case of a country which had won its freedom, the State being a Sovereign National State,—Parliamentary legislatures and Parliamentary procedure are not imposed on it from without but are the creation of the nationals of the country itself, and are the instruments and expression of the national will. There, therefore, no valid ground could exist for patriotism kicking against any fetters, however galling, on the ground that they are not of its own manufacture. But in an Imperial dependent possession, Parliamentary Legislatures must perforce be so devised as to suit in all

vital and fundamental matters the interests of Imperialism in the first instance. Hence patriotism when it finds its way effectually barred against further progress is bound to rebel against imposed constitutional fetters. And even such liberty of political action as may be granted by the Imperial Masters by a balancing of interests of the Sovereign and the dependent country, must always be hedged in with constitutional fetters. For the ultimate fact is that the interests of nationalistic patriotism and of Imperialism must always remain unbridged. If so, the non-boycotting section of the intelligentsia working in and through the Legislatures, the Law Courts and the State-controlled Universities must, if they aspire to place the interests of their country and their nationals above the interests of the Sovereign Imperial country and its nationals must sooner or later, and sooner than later, find their way barred by a stone-wall. And if they are not prepared to co-operate with the political masters on the terms suitable to Imperialism, they will have to resort to either of two courses. Either they will have to renounce their legislative activities and all their other Governmental connections and come back to the country for the work of mass-awakening; or they will have to retire from the political field altogether. That is the dilemma in which all honest political workers who cannot make up their minds to dis-associate with the Administration must ultimately find themselves.

Probing their present mentality, one finds that the sense of political futility urges the non-boycotting section of the intelligentsia in one direction; while the sense of Parliamentarianism pulls them back in the opposite direction. In other words, they could neither do with, nor do without, the Legislatures or the other institutions by which, with their voluntary services, the Imperialist Administration in this country has been functioning. Of course on the theoretical plane, it is as clear to them as noonday that they being the main props of the Administration, the moment their voluntary services were withdrawn, that moment the whole edifice of the Administration would topple down like a house of cards. But opposing forces, as we have seen, are at work within them and the necessary transformation of outlook has yet to be reached.

In the circumstances, it is only the boycotting section of the intelligentsia,—the thoroughgoing non-co-operators that have been able to take to the country as their field of work, and have been pursuing an uphill task. They are practically the only organised party in the country working for an awakening among the masses through their economic uplift. That work is an uphill struggle, not only because of the intrinsic difficulties of the task. The remote rural areas which have to be reached are so far away not only from the urban areas, but also from the interior railway lines. And further, they lie so very scattered and segregated that apart from all other handicaps (*e.g.*, their appalling poverty, dirt, disease, and the visitation of floods, etc. the problem of reaching them is one of tremendous difficulty. The masses, *i.e.*, the millions, cannot be awakened from a distance by political workers gathered together in well-lighted cities halls or in suburban areas and enjoying also the amenities of modern civilisation. Mass-awakening is a very handy, democratic phrase; but it means more than meets the ear. If anything, it must, in the first instance, mean bringing food to the famished mouths of the masses; and freeing them also from other pressing ills of daily life. But it means specially, freeing them from the spirit of despondency and depression which has overtaken and overwhelmed them. They need no further awakening. If and when this awakening comes through the peaceful efforts and under the non-violent guidance of the educated political workers, mass-activity and mass-movement would follow as matters of course. These would follow also the lines of a peaceful evolution and would not partake of a revolutionary character. For this work, so vast in volume, so tremendous in practical consequences from the point of view of Swaraj, the entire energies of the awakened educated classes need to be mobilised. Not an ounce of available energy could be or should be frittered away. If Indian Swaraj does mean a democratic Swaraj and not a Swaraj for the classes of the intelligentsia, (that is to say, a Swaraj in which the masses would lie under the domination of these latter in the place of the present body of rulers)—then it follows that the masses must have our immediate and even undivided attention. It should not be the

work of one single, solitary individual like Mahatma Gandhi ploughing his lonely furrow, with a handful of lieutenants,—‘handful,’ that is, when viewed in relation to the hugeness and complexity of constructive effort that lies in front. But even so, that work has become tremendously difficult because of the lead given by the intellectual classes in favour of political agitation in and through the Councils as the shorter way to political emancipation. Then, again, as we have seen, the vital connection of these classes with the different branches of the Administrative machinery making of them a community apart and a privileged community at that, also stands in the way of a rapid dissemination of the gospel of an Indian mass movement as the only thing that mattered in Indian politics. Therefore, but for the efforts of the thoroughgoing Non-co-operators who at the present date and under the circumstances noted above form, comparatively speaking, a small minority, the political gospel which they preach, namely, that the awakening of the masses is the only instrument for the political emancipation of India would have made but little headway since the suspension of the non-co-operation movement at Belgaum.

The evil engendered by the non-boycotting Parliamentary mentality which like a subtle poison corrupts or perverts our sense of perspective is also responsible for the fact that the Congress executive organisations throughout the country are engaged only or mainly in work helpful to Parliamentaryism, *e.g.*, canvassing and organising votes for Congress candidates for the Legislatures, the Municipalities, etc. Thus, it would appear that not only have the legislative stalwarts placed themselves in such a position as have disabled them directly from carrying on any systematic work of uplift in the country. They have also dragged into their orbit a vast body of workers from among the western educated section of the population with the result that their mentality also has been affected and a desire for winning freedom by shortcuts has been generated. These if left to themselves must have been silently drawn by the lead given by the boycotting section of the intelligentsia working in the country for mass-uplift and mass-awakening. But the excitement and success

of Parliamentarianism' at the polls; and the winning of flashing victories over the Government inside Council Chambers and the consequent broadcasting throughout the Indian world that the intelligentsia were engaged in scaling the walls of the bureaucratic citadel; and lastly, the lead given by the Congress and Congressmen that a shorter cut involving less suffering and sacrifice than Mahatma Gandhi's method, has been found for the political emancipation of the country,—all these in their cumulative effect, have told upon the mentality of the Congress workers and made them preachers and propagandists of the new-old cult of Parliamentarianism. The result has been that whenever the call has come, as it has come of late, from the leaders in the higher rungs of the Congress ladder, to start some concrete work whether in the shape of the boycott of British goods or of foreign cloth, or indeed, any work of rural uplift, the appeal does not come with a compelling force to the minds of the workers. For the true ring of inspiration is always wanting in such call. If, for instance, the boycott of foreign goods is put forward before the workers by the Parliamentary Congress executives as an urgent item of work, it can never become paramount. For it is always to be subsidiary or subservient to the higher needs of Parliamentary work in the Councils which is always paramount. Therefore, the motive power or inspiration behind any secondary duty imposed upon the workers is always halting, or at best plays a subordinate part in their hearts. The result is that the present-day Congress executive organisations in the country, notwithstanding that they continue to exist, have remained more or less dormant or become active only at the time of the elections. Therefore, they can never compare with what they were in the days of non-co-operation when their work was not Parliamentary but lay in awakening the general body of people along the lines laid down by the Congress. In the circumstances, therefore, the call comes often and often from the present-day political leaders of the Congress that there was a need for a thorough overhauling of the Congress Committees operating in the country. But this overhauling of the Congress executive organisations cannot and does not extend to anything beyond a re-shuffling of the cards, a

change in the personnel, putting in new blood here and there, or at least bringing in more representative men. But the centre and the seat of the disease remains untouched. For machinery is not everything. The purpose which the machinery is intended to serve must be inspiring enough to call forth the best energies of the workers. The contention is that the spirit that would invigorate the present Congress Committees and make them powerful motive forces for work in the country has received no accession. In the palmy days of non-violent non-co-operation the whole country was pulsating with life because of the inspiration behind the movement. Then the call had gone forth that Swaraj must be wrested from unwilling hands by our self-effort our self-sacrifice, and our self-suffering. This meant hurling ourselves against the whole power of an Imperial autocracy and the consequent evolution of a high type of manhood. The call then was not for Parliamentary tactics and Parliamentary agitation. The call was for the development of the whole people's strength outside the sphere of Government. The call was that India must stand on her feet, that Indian men and women must no longer petition, protest nor seek to negotiate with their political masters until they have developed their strength, the strength that would work as the sanction for all their demands. The call was for the assertion of manhood and womanhood throughout the vast country. The call was the call for a great mass-awakening and a great mass movement, and the whole of the Congress programme was attuned to that end and the whole of the myriad subordinate Congress executives throughout the country were engaged in this work of national development, along the lines laid down by the Congress and its higher executives, namely the All-India Congress Committee and its Working Committee.

The inevitable consequence of the changed mentality of Congress leaders and consequently of their followers is seen in the poor output of work done by the District and other subordinate Congress Committees of the present day. They continue to exist but in a moribund condition, except of course as I have said at the time of the General Elections for the different Legislatures. Then, the struggle for getting into the Councils and the Assembly becomes so intense

and so overpowering; and the waste of expenditure becomes so appalling; and the wave of mutual bitterness and recriminations between Party, and Party, between candidate and candidate and between their respective canvassers rises so mountain-high; and the machinery of lying propaganda is set in motion with such cruelty of purpose that a spectator from outside might imagine that India was a free, sovereign country and was in the throes of an election agitation and turmoil quite in accordance with the traditions of a free country. But since the contrary is the truth, the disinterested spectator would be soon disillusioned. And unable to discover why the subject people of India should, of all peoples, spend so much energy and waste so much powder and shot over elections which lead to nowhere or at best to a blind alley, he would despair of the Congress and those that are at the head of its affairs. The leaders of a subject people engaged in such mimic warfare would be an experience of a wholly novel kind and the thought would ever and anon cross his mind,—‘Would the Congress and its large following ever revert to their proper work in the country of “rousing the people instead of talking and talking mere words,” whether in the Councils or elsewhere *

* The quotation is from a speech at the All-India Congress Committee held at Delhi on Nov. 4, 1928.

APPENDIX A.*

A Bird's-eye View of the Movement of Repression organised by government during 1921-1922.

In tracing the history of non-co-operation from its inception to the Ahmedabad Congress we have touched but lightly on the attitude of the Government and the general policy of repression inaugurated by it, as the subject, though an integral part of that history is important enough to deserve special and separate treatment. The Government were embarrassed at the startling success of the N. C. O. movement from the very beginning. They apprehended that at such a stage repression might strengthen the movement rather than check it. They, therefore, began with some pin-pricks such as depriving pensioners of pensions, and landholding non-co-operators of irrigation water. Isolated prosecutions were also resorted to, but, on the whole, it seemed as if they had realised that to oppose the movement with force at that stage would be suicidal.

Lord Chelmsford† had to be content with pouring uneasy "Rally the Moderates," ridicule on the movement. It was this attitude which underlay the Government of India Resolution of November 6, 1920, which with amazing self-complacency left the "most foolish of all foolish schemes" to die of inanition. Repression not being thought advisable at that stage strenuous efforts were made to rally the Moderates. Lurid pictures were drawn of an India which would be plunged in anarchy and red ruin if the strong arm of the English were withdrawn. It was declared that Non-co-operators were leading the country to Bolshevism, and Anglo-Indian newspapers published sensational articles on an India being driven to the verge of a precipice. The Afghan bogey was raised to divide the Hindus from the Mussalmans. Feverish appeals were made to the Councillors to stand by the Government in the hour of its sorest trial. "I appeal to you members of this Council"‡ harangued Sir Harcourt Butler§ "to assist your Government

* Summarised from the "Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee appointed by the All-India Congress Committee," and issued on October 20, 1922.

† Then Viceroy and Governor-General of India.—

‡ Legislative Council of U. P.

§ Then Governor of the U. P. (United Provinces of Agra and Oudh).

not only in this Council but actively in your constituencies."

Sir Harcourt Butler in His Excellency knew that his Council was no better than a Greek Chorus, and that its own support was of no consequence. Hence the appeal to the Councillors to venture out of the safety of seclusion and face the music outside. But the Councillors knew the nature of the reception in store for them, if they attempted to approach the electors, whose confidence they were supposed to enjoy, and wisely chose discretion as the better part of valour. This was soon apparent to Sir Harcourt Butler who now appealed to Commissioners of Divisions to help in rousing the Moderates generally in a remarkable circular letter some choice passages from which are given below:—

"Non-co-operation shifts its ground repeatedly according as it meets with success or failure while counter-moves of a restricted kind are labouring to overtake the schemes which they have been powerless to anticipate."

"The moderate element in the country may be organised and led with the express object of defeating the Non-co-operation movement."

"If Government officers declare themselves openly against Non-co-operation it may be possible to give the moderate opinion the coherence and initiative which it lacks."

Similar exhortations were made by other Provincial Governors.

By January 1921, it had become quite clear that Moderate opinion, useful as it was to hoodwink the British public, was of no avail to choke the popular movement. The result of the Nagpur Congress* disappointed the Government, which had expected a division in the Congress camp among the Nationalists themselves. A new policy was therefore outlined in their letter to the Local Governments which was referred to by Sir William Vincent† in his speech in the Assembly on March 23rd. "For the present, therefore," that letter stated, "the Government of India would prefer to rely on measures such as:

(1) "Keeping the closest possible watch on attempts by the non-co-operators to spread disaffection among the rural masses and the labouring classes in the big towns or industrial centres;

(2) the initiation and early enactment of remedial legislation

* Held in the 4th week of December, 1920.

† Then Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

wherever, as in the matter of tenancy law in some provinces, such legislation is required;

(3) counter-propaganda, as for example by giving the widest possible publicity to the intention of the Government to introduce remedial measures;

(4) the vigorous prosecution under the ordinary law of all persons who are guilty of making seditious speeches and of inciting to violence and against whom evidence is available.

The Government of India have already urged this measure to which they attach the utmost importance on Local Governments, and they must again express their regret that so far such prosecutions have been instituted only in a small number of cases. The Government of India have refrained, for reasons that have been fully explained to Local Governments, from prosecuting the leaders on the general charge of advocating Non-co-operation. But they must again impress on Local Governments that this fact constitutes no reason for refraining from prosecuting others.

(5) the enforcement in general of respect for law. Cases have come to the notice of the Government of India in which large crowds have been allowed to indulge with impunity in demonstrations of an obviously unlawful character. Incidents of this kind cannot but tend to weaken the respect for law and order amongst the masses of the people."

It is no wonder that after this admonition the Local Governments all at once indulged in an orgy of repression. They expounded these instructions to their own district officials in circulars which duly dotted the i's and crossed the t's in the Government of India circular. The notorious Rainy circular in Bihar may be cited as an instance. The activities of Non-co-operators were sought to be suppressed at every turn not only by the proclamation of the Seditious Meetings Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, but by a free lawless and tyrannical use of section 144 and the security sections of the Criminal Procedure Code.

The district officials were, by a modification of the Government Servants Conduct Rules, authorised to take part in political movements and thus enabled to use undue influence

Govt. Servants form Aman Sabhas. to promote what in the United Provinces are called Aman Sabhas—organisations, membership to which offered the temptation of immunity from official high-handedness. For a time some of the prominent Moderates took a leading part in the activities of these Sabhas, but prominent Liberals who joined them had subsequently to resign their membership when they

realised the true nature of these organizations. The ridiculous attempt to coerce the people into loving the Government was made, and proved a dismal failure. We draw special attention to the methods employed by the Sābhas detailed in the U. P. Provincial Report extracts from which are given in Appendix VIII.* The instructions of the Government were blindly followed by the magistracy who surrendered their judgment to the exigencies of the administration—witness the debate in the Bihar Council on the order under section 144 on Babu Rajendra Prasad on the ground, not that the Magistrate was satisfied that there was a likelihood of a disturbance of public tranquility, but that he acted in pursuance of the Government circular. In another case under section 107, a police Sub-Inspector in the course of his evidence confessed that he sent a report against a Non-co-operator on information received for a superior officer, and the witness had to be given up as hostile.

There is reason to believe that repression in its severe form was started as much in response to the call for it from England as to the apprehensions of the Government of India. The call for "firmness" intensified from day to day and the Emergency Committee of the Indo-British Association commenced an unscrupulous the violent propaganda against the movement. The Moderate element among the Britishers in India felt that the agitation in England would have mischievous consequences on the political situation in this country. But a telegram of caution to Lord Ampthill, the President of the Emergency Committee, from Sir Frank Carter, only elicited the insulting reply "Mind your own business." The storm brewing in London at last burst over the heads of the Ali Brothers who were arrested in September and tried by the Court of

Ali Brothers' trial. Sessions at Karachi on a number of charges, the more serious of which viz., those under sections 120 B and 131 (Criminal conspiracy and abetment of mutiny) broke down completely, but convictions and heavy sentences were recorded on the minor charges under sections 505, 109 and 117 (circulating false statements with intent to cause mutiny, etc.). This result of the trial, however, did not prevent Sir W. Vincent from influencing the Legislative Assembly by mentioning a certain letter written by a third party,

* This Appendix runs over fifty-three pages of close print. It gives a rapid summary of the various acts of repression and of illegal and extra-legal measures adopted by the provincial Governments, all in the name of Law and Order.—K

openly denounced by the Ali Brothers as a forgery, and never produced at the trial, though in possession of the Government, all the time, as evidence of the Brothers' complicity in serious offences against the State. That such a statement was allowed to pass unchallenged in an Assembly having among its members some lawyers of repute, furnishes another illustration of the utter irresponsibility of the Councillors.

The Ali Brothers were convicted and sentenced on the 1st November. The Congress took their conviction as an affront to freedom of opinion and repeated the Brothers' offence in the resolutions passed by its committees and from a thousand platforms. Many thousands took part in this reaffirmation. The Government was completely non-plussed and not a single prosecution was undertaken, but a desperate attempt was made by a more rigorous use of the Seditious Meetings Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act to suppress the Khilafat and the Congress Volunteer Corps.

H. R. H. the Prince of Wales arrived in India on the 17th November, 1921. On that day happened what Sir W. Vincent has described as a "despicable thing"—the memorable

All-India *hartal* which in truth was a remarkable manifestation of the determined will of the nation to condemn the exploitation of the Royal Family for political ends. It was made quite clear from the very beginning that no insult was meant to H. R. H. No reasonable doubt could possibly be entertained on that point after the very full statement made by the All-India Committee (Appendix X-B.) and the article of Mahatmaji under the heading "Honour the Prince" in the *Young India* of October 27, 1921. But the bureaucracy would not be turned from the course it had decided upon. The good old rule of the British constitution, that the King was above party politics, was trotted out, in and out of season, by persons who were expected to know better. Every child in the country knew that the visit of H. R. H. was originally intended to give a start to the working of the new Reforms, which the country had refused to accept; and that H. R. H. having been prevented by ill-health from accomplishing that object, his revered grand-uncle was brought out of his retirement to do so. After this it was but natural to apprehend that the Prince would be called upon in the course of his visit to give his Royal blessing to these very highly controversial reforms, an apprehension which subsequent events fully justified. There was, above all, the great political effect which the bureaucracy was calculating to produce by bringing together all India to welcome the Heir to the Throne at a time when the whole

country was seething with discontent. Despite these patent facts assurance after assurance was given that the visit of H. R. H. was entirely unconnected with politics.

The country as a whole was opposed to the visit, even Moderates not being in favour of it. Addressing the Liberal Conference at Bombay Mr. Shastri said:

“ Moreover, there was one thing above all which drew the harsh character of this dual Government out and exhibited it in a most glaring form. That was the visit of the Prince of Wales. He did not think there was any one there who desired it most enthusiastically. He certainly did not. He counselled against the visit as long as he could, but the visit came, and what happened when the boycott of that visit was proclaimed by the Non-co-operators? The result was that Government in order to make it a success against this opposition had to use all the arms in their control. They used all the repressive laws they could think of. The result was that even the Liberal public and the Moderate party stood out of that co-operation with Government in all that went to maintain law and order for which they had previously pledged their word. This had drawn into prominent relief the odious feature of dyarchy. He mentioned this to show that through the action of Government itself the bad nature of dyarchy had been brought out to the knowledge of everybody.”

Many and various were the forms of repression employed to secure a quiet atmosphere during the visit of H. R. H. It is impossible to describe them fully without exceeding the limits of a report of this nature. It was most lawless and cruel in the Punjab, U. P., Bengal, and Assam. We give in Appendix VIII, extracts from the reports supplied to us by the Congress Committees of these provinces which will show the nature of the atrocities committed in the name of law and order. Speaking generally many districts in these provinces have from time to time been practically denuded of the more active of their Congress and Khilafat workers by wholesale and indiscriminate arrests and prosecutions under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and sections 107, 108 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and section 124A and 153A of the Indian Penal Code. The United Provinces had the unique distinction of having 55 members of their Provincial Committee taken in one sweep by the Police while engaged in discussing a resolution on volunteering at an emergent meeting held in Allahabad. The

draft resolution was seized, one by one every member was asked if he approved of it and on his replying in the affirmative was secured in the police van waiting downstairs on the road. Those who did not move quickly enough had some gentle pressure applied to them from behind and the progress of one at least was accelerated by a mild assault. The 55 were tried under the Criminal Law Amendment Act before a competent Court for the offence of drafting and discussing a proposal for the enlistment of volunteers and each was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment which was either simple or rigorous according as each individual impressed the Magistrate with his special aptitude for the particular variety of punishment. There was of course no defence and no appeal, but a special judge subsequently appointed by the Local Government to examine a certain class of political case appears to have advised that these 55 had committed no offence. Attempt after attempt made by the Local Councillors to have this report laid on the table failed and although the Government had finally to admit that the convictions under the charges framed were illegal, it was not so ill-advised as to allow the 55 picked public men of the Province to slip through its hands. And so it came about that these men remained in gaol, some being treated as first class misdemeanants and others as ordinary criminals. The reason given by the Local Government for keeping them in duress vile was that these men had not appealed and that if they had, it would have been open to the appellate court to alter the convictions under some section of the criminal law more applicable to their case! One of them, a strong young man, the bread-winner of his family, has since succumbed to an attack of fever in the Lucknow Jail, the circumstances of which were discussed in the press and an open enquiry demanded but was not allowed. The survivors have now served a little more than half the sentences inflicted, but have so far failed to attract the notice of the Central Government presided over by the Ex-Lord Chief Justice of England.*

Illegality of convictions
no reason for release.

It may be convenient here to refer briefly to some other notable trials, to show how British justice vindicates itself in India.

* Lord Reading, Viceroy, who had given out before he left for India that he was coming out to do justice to India, and that one reason for the appointment of a Lord Chief Justice to the post which he was going to fill was that he was to mete out even-handed justice to Indians.—K

- * Deshbandhu Chatttranjan Das, the President-elect of the Congress, was arrested on the 23rd December, 1921 under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, on the eve of his departure for Ahmedabad for issuing a public appeal calling upon the people to enlist as volunteers. The trial was adjourned from time to time for various reasons till the 12th February, 1922. The accused having declined to plead or make a statement, it became necessary to prove his signatures on the papers purporting to be the original manuscripts sent to the press. Besides some other evidence, the Government expert swore on a comparison of that signature with Government expert's admitted signatures that the former was in the hand-writing of the person who made the latter. Deshbandhu was convicted and sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment after being detained for about two months as an undertrial prisoner. After his conviction, in a message to his countrymen, he made it quite clear that the signatures found to be his were really written by other persons named by him. Sometime after the Indian member of the Bengal Executive Council, an Ex-Chief Justice of Madras, intimated that the case of Mr. Das was being considered by the Government, but such was the patient care bestowed by the Government that Mr. Das was released after serving the full sentence before the consideration of his case was completed.

The great Hindu leader of Bengal having been secured in prison a Mahomedan leader of eminence was next wanted to complete the triumph of repression. The choice fell upon Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a respected Mahomedan divine, Vice-President of the Central Khilafat Committee and an earnest member of the Congress who was next arrested, convicted under section 124A of the Penal Code (Sedition) and awarded a sentence of imprisonment which he has nearly served out.

Lala Lajpat Rai, Ex-President of the Congress was tried under the Seditious Meetings Act for presiding at a meeting of the Provincial Congress Committee.

Lala Lajpat Rai convicted released and re-convicted. Some correspondence had previously passed between the Magistrate and the Lalaji about the nature of the meeting and the fact that it was merely a committee meeting, not open to the public, was well-known to the Magistrate. Lalaji was, however, convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The Law Officer of the Government, who should have been consulted before the prosecution was launched, gave his opinion after the conviction.

tion that the Seditious Meetings Act did not apply, upon which Lalaji was released from the prison but was re-arrested the moment he stepped out of the main gate for another offence, and in due course convicted and sentenced to a term of 2 years' imprisonment, which he is now undergoing.

Babu Bhagwandas a highly respected citizen of Benares and president of the U. P. Provincial Committee was arrested under the Criminal Amendment Act for issuing and distributing an appeal to the shopkeepers to observe *hartal* on the day of the arrival of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The conviction was so utterly absurd that an agitation in the press in which Dr. Subramaniya Iyer, Ex-Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, took part compelled the Government to cancel the unexpired portion of the sentence.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was convicted under sections 385 and 505, Indian Penal Code, for having declared his intention to picket foreign shops in a public speech and for asking the audience to help him. Another charge under which also he was convicted was abetment of extortion based on the fact that he presided at a committee meeting at which letters were agreed to be sent to certain cloth merchants calling upon them to pay the fines imposed by the cloth merchants' own association under their own rules. He was sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment, and is now serving his sentence.

For fuller information about the above cases we refer to the statements of the gentlemen concerned printed in Appendix XIII.

These are well-known cases which have attracted public attention on account of the importance of the gentlemen concerned. There are other cases and their number is legion, in which Non-co-operators have been falsely charged and their convictions secured on the flimsiest evidence. This has no doubt been considerably facilitated by the attitude of indifference adopted by Non-co-operators at their trials. The knowledge that they neither defend themselves nor cross-examine witnesses has put a premium on false evidence. The best illustration of this was afforded at the trial of one of the members of this Enquiry Committee (Pandit Motilal Nehru). To prove his signature in Hindi, probably the first he had made in his life, the prosecution called a man in rags, to all appearances a beggar in the street, whom the accused had never seen before. He swore that the signature was of the accused while holding the paper in his hand upside down for half a

second. This was the only proof of the signature on a volunteering form and on this evidence the Ex-President and the General Secretary of the Congress was convicted under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment which he has fully served out.

The illegalities committed in the course of the trials of Provincial budgets of Non-co-operators are, however, nothing compared to the appalling lawlessness which prevailed outside the Courts. It may be broadly stated that causing injury to the person, property, or reputation of a Non-co-operator not only ceased to be an offence but came to be regarded as an act of loyalty to the Government of a specially meritorious character. We have indicated above the general trend of repression in the country and have given a few important extracts from the reports of the Punjab, U. P., Bengal and Assam Congress Committees in Appendix XIII, showing specific instances of a grosser kind for which the local administrations have earned wide notoriety. Bombay, Gujarat, Ajmere-Merwara and Central India stand at the other end and may be congratulated on having so far escaped any trouble worth the name. Central Provinces, (Hindustani and Mahrati) Berar, Maharashtra, Karnatak and Tamil Nadu have had their share of repression chiefly in connection with liquor shop picketting. The security sections were freely used in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Desh. Bihar has witnessed considerable display of terrorism in the districts of Muzaffarpur and the Santhal Parganas but has on the whole been quiet. Kerala, comprising the Moplah country, stands by itself for the inhuman barbarities committed by a fanatical population on the one hand, and the infuriated forces of law and order on the other; while the notorious Malabar train tragedy easily beats the worst popular excesses committed in any part of India for the callous disregard of human life it has revealed. Utkal and Andhra have come in for a fair share of severe repression and stand next only to the northern Provinces.

Taking the country as a whole a general summary of the various kinds of anti-non-co-operation activities may be given in a few short sentences. Its horrid varieties. Gandhi caps and Khaddar dress were anathema to the officials generally throughout India, and marked out the wearer for all kinds of insults and humiliations as also for false prosecution. Assaults on volunteers, stripping them of their clothing and ducking them in village tanks in winter months were some of the innocent practical jokes

designed by the police for their own amusement. Confiscation of licenses for arms, forfeiture of *jagirs*, *watans* and *inams*, withholding of water supply for irrigation and refusing *Takavi* advances were some of the milder punishments for those who were not charged with specific offences. Destruction of Congress and Khilafat offices and records and of national educational institutions, burning of houses and crops and looting of property were resorted to in the case of the more obstinate recalcitrants. Several cases of forcible removal of jewellery from the persons of women and of indecent assaults and outrages committed on them as well as the burning and trampling under foot of religious books and other sacred objects have also been brought to our notice. The estate of an extra-loyal Zemindar in Utkal has gained a wide notoriety in that Province for cases of shooting, assaults on women and a novel method of humiliating and insulting high caste people by sprinkling liquor on them and compelling them to carry night soil on their shoulders.

All this the people have borne with admirable patience and self-restraint. The spirit of non-violence has permeated the masses generally beyond all expectation. We can safely assert that there is no country in the world where the people, as a whole, would have stood the horrors, described above, with the almost superhuman self-control shown by the general population of India. It is all very well to shut one's eyes to the due proportion of things and point to sporadic cases of outbursts of violence here and there in a vast country like this, and seek to establish a connection between them and non-co-operation by specious reasoning. We leave it to the unbiassed historian of the future to say whether the responsibility for a few sad occurrences is to be thrown on the non-co-operator or whether he is to be given the sole credit for the general quiet which has prevailed under maddening provocation. It may be difficult for the European mind to grasp that the law of suffering is to the Indian the law of his being. If this is not so, why is it that no serious violence except that on the part of the Government has occurred in a large number of places where repression has taken the severest and most unbearable form? Is the Indian the despicable coward or the weakling who has not the courage or the strength to hit back? The answer, clear and conclusive, is given by the outstanding feature of the situation that it is the martial races of Northern India both in the Punjab and the United Provinces who, while smarting under brutal treatment, have maintained the most wonderful self-restraint. The brave

Akalis of the Punjab are at the moment of writing these lines giving an object lesson to the world in combining invincible courage with cool self-possession, which will add an inspiring chapter to the history of their race, already rich in heroic deeds and brilliant achievements. We refrain from going into the details of the great struggle which is proceeding under the eyes of an admiring world, as we do not wish to anticipate the finding of the Guru-ka-Bagh Enquiry Committee, appointed by the Working Committee, now sitting at Amritsar. For the purposes of this report it is enough to refer to the two statements issued to the press by Mr. C. F. Andrews (Appendix VIII) who has seen the brutalities committed on the unresisting Akalis in the sacred name of law and order with his own eyes, and to leave the reader to apportion bravery and cowardice between the parties according to merit.

Brave Akalis—an object lesson to the world.

We have not attempted a detailed description of the visit of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, but the facts so far as they bear on this report may briefly be stated here. That splendid thing—the *hartal*—followed H. R. H. wherever he went.

Stage-managed routes for the Royal procession.

The bureaucracy left no stone unturned to camouflage the real feeling of the country by lining the route taken by H. R. H. with the hirelings of talukadars and zemindars, the tenants holding lands under the Court of Wards, and ignorant villagers deceived into the belief that they were being taken to have the *darshan* of Mahatma Gandhi; by offers of free motor drives to the people to have a view of their *Shahzada*; in the towns by exhorting and pressing college students and school children through their professors and teachers to assemble at appointed places and generally by utilizing subservient news agencies to publish highly exaggerated and garbled accounts of the “warm welcome” accorded to H. R. H. by the people of India. But “here in India we know” (as the Viceroy said in another connection the other day) what really happened. The *hartals* were an unqualified success everywhere in the Indian

quarters and bazars; the villagers who had come to see Mahatmajai relieved their disappointment by shouting “Mahatma

Gandhi-ki-jai” when the Prince passed; the street urchins gladly accepted the offer of free motor drives only to run back home immediately after arrival at the selected spot long before the Prince passed; college students and school children were conspicuous by their absence in most places, and at one point on the route of the Royal procession in a certain large town lighted a bonfire of foreign cloth on the day of H. R. H.’s arrival;

the authorities of the Hindu University at Benares who had erected a huge amphitheatre for a brave show of their young

Lukewarm reception at the Hindu University. hopefuls, were hard put to fill up the tastefully decorated structure at the last

moment and met with but poor success; the subservient news agencies could ill conceal the determined abstention of Indians of all classes from the functions arranged and gave up the impossible attempt at Allahabad which rose to the full height of its injured dignity at the wholesale arrests of its worthy citizens made immediately before the Prince's visit. But it is said that all this was due to coercion and intimidation.

Complete *Hartal* at Allahabad. The pertinent question asked by a writer in the *London Times*—who was left in Allahabad to coerce and intimidate,

after the numerous arrests of workers which had already been made?—has not been answered. Can it be that despite the strenuous efforts of the representatives in India of the "most determined"* and "hard fibred people in the world"† the whole country from end to end throbbed with one impulse as a result of the coercion and intimidation employed by the handful of those who, in the words of Lord Reading, "did not represent the real views of the Indian people" and most of whom were secured behind prison walls? If so, the sooner the most determined people in the world withdraw their present representatives and entrust their good name to the safe keeping of the handful, the better it would be for the future happiness and progress of both.

In Northern India, from the extreme west of the Punjab to the extreme east of Bengal and Assam, the

Concluding Remarks. wholesale arrests of all grades of Congress workers and other repressive measures employed by the Government failed to shake the resolute determination of the people to stand on their natural rights of free speech and association. In Calcutta, Allahabad, Lucknow and other places, too numerous to mention in detail, batches of volunteers wearing their badges and carrying Swaraj banners marched, one after the other, in an endless stream along the public streets and in front of police stations offering themselves for arrest but were mostly allowed to go scotfree. The lock-ups were full, the gaols were crowded. Repression ceased to keep pace with the great upheaval and dropped its heavy hand

* Words used by Mr. Montagu, then Secretary of State for India.

† Words used by Lord Birkenhead, late Secretary of State for India.

through sheer satiety. Early in December H. E. the Viceroy had frankly admitted that he was "puzzled and perplexed." And now the whole machine began to creak and showed signs of an impending breakdown.

APPENDIX B.

Mahatma Gandhi's Statement before the Court.

Before reading his written statement, Mr. Gandhi spoke a few words as introductory remarks to the whole statement. He said :—

"Before I read this statement I would like to state that I entirely endorse the learned Advocate General's remarks in connection with my humble self. I think that he was entirely fair to me in all the statements that he has made, because it is very true and I have no desire whatsoever to conceal from this Court the fact that to preach disaffection towards the existing system of Government has become almost a passion with me, and the learned Advocate General is also entirely in the right when he says that my preaching of disaffection did not commence with my connection with "Young India," but that it commenced much earlier and in the statement that I am about to read, it will be my painful duty to admit before this Court that it commenced much earlier than the period stated by the Advocate General. It is a most painful duty with me but I have to discharge that duty knowing the responsibility that rests upon my shoulders, and I wish to endorse all the blame that the learned Advocate General has thrown on my shoulders in connection with the Bombay occurrences, Madras occurrences and the Chauri Chaura occurrences. Thinking over these deeply and sleeping over them night after night, it is impossible for me to dissociate myself from the diabolical crimes of Chauri Chaura or the mad outrages of Bombay. He is quite right when he says, that as a man of responsibility, a man having received a fair share of education, having had a fair share of experience of this world, I should have known the consequences of every one of my acts. I knew that I was playing with fire. I ran the risk and if I was set free I would still do the same. I have felt this morning that I would have failed in my duty, if I did not say what I said here just now.

I wanted to avoid violence. I want to avoid violence. Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed. But I had to make my choice. I had either to submit to a system which I considered had done an irreparable harm to my country, or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth, when they understood the truth from my

lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it and I am therefore here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy. I do not plead any extenuating act. I am here, therefore, to invite and cheerfully submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me, for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is as I am just going to say in my statement either to resign your post, or inflict on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and law you are assisting to administer are good for the people. I do not expect that kind of conversion, but by the time I have finished with my statement you will perhaps have a glimpse of what is raging within my breast to run this maddest risk which a sane man can run."

The statement was then read out.

STATEMENT.

"I owe it perhaps to the Indian public and to the public in England, to placate which this prosecution is mainly taken up, that I should explain why from a staunch loyalist and co-operator I have become an uncompromising disaffectionist and non-co-operator. To the Court too I should say why I plead guilty to the charge of promoting disaffection towards the Government established by law in India.

My public life began in 1893 in South Africa in troubled weather. My first contact with British authority in that country was not of a happy character. I discovered that as a man and an Indian I had no rights. More correctly I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian.

But I was not baffled. I thought that this treatment of Indians was an excrescence upon a system that was intrinsically and mainly good. I gave the Government my voluntary and hearty co-operation, criticising it freely where I felt it was faulty, but never wishing its destruction.

Consequently when the existence of the Empire was threatened in 1899 by the Boer challenge, I offered my services to it, raised a volunteer ambulance corps and served at several actions that took place for the relief of Ladysmith. Similarly in 1906 at the time of the Zulu revolt I raised a stretcher-bearer party and served till the end of the 'rebellion.' On both these occasions I received medals and was even mentioned in despatches. For my work in South Africa I was given by Lord Hardinge a Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal. When the war broke out in 1914 between England and Germany I raised a volunteer ambulance corps in London consisting of the then resident

Indians in London, chiefly students. Its work was acknowledged by the authorities to be valuable. Lastly in India when a special appeal was made at the War Conference in Delhi in 1918 by Lord Chelmsford for recruits, I struggled at the cost of my health to raise a corps in Kheda and the response was being made when the hostilities ceased and orders were received that no more recruits were wanted. In all these efforts at service I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality in the Empire for my countrymen.

The first shock came in the shape of the Rowlatt Act, a law designed to rob the people of all real freedom. I felt called upon to lead an intensive agitation against it. Then followed the Punjab horrors beginning with the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and culminating in crawling orders, public floggings and other indescribable humiliations. I discovered too that the plighted word of the Prime Minister to the Mussalmans of India regarding the integrity of Turkey and the holy places of Islam was not likely to be fulfilled. But in spite of the forebodings and the grave warnings of friends, at the Amritsar Congress in 1919 I fought for co-operation and working the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, hoping that the Prime Minister would redeem his promise to the Indian Mussalmans, that the Punjab wound would be healed and that the reforms inadequate and unsatisfactory though they were, marked a new era of hope in the life of India.

But all that hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was not to be redeemed. The Punjab crime was white-washed and most culprits went not only unpunished but remained in service and some continued to draw pensions from the Indian revenue, and in some cases were even rewarded. I saw too that not only did the reforms not mark a change of heart, but they were only a method of further draining India of her wealth and of prolonging her servitude.

I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically. A disarmed India has no power of resistance against any aggressor if she wanted to engage in an armed conflict with him. So much is this the case that some of our best men consider that India must take generations before she can achieve the Dominion status. She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines. Before the British advent India spun and wove in her millions of cottages just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India's existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes as described by English witnesses. Little do town-

dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realise that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye.* I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history. The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. My unbiassed examination of the Punjab Martial Law cases has led me to believe that at least ninety-five per cent. of convictions were wholly bad. My experience of political cases in India leads me to the conclusion that in nine out of every ten the condemned men were totally innocent. Their crime consisted in the love of their country. In ninety-nine cases out of hundred justice has been denied to Indians as against Europeans in the Courts of India. This is not an exaggerated picture. It is the experience of almost every Indian who has had anything to do with such cases. In my opinion the administration of the law is thus prostituted consciously or unconsciously for the benefit of the exploiter.

The greatest misfortune is that Englishmen and their Indian associates in the administration of the country do not know that they are engaged in the crime I have attempted to describe. I am satisfied that many Englishmen and Indian officials honestly believe that they are administering one of the best systems devised in the world and that India is making steady though slow progress. They do not know that a subtle but effective system of terrorism and an organised display of force on the one hand, and the deprivation of all powers of retaliation or self-defence on the other, have emasculated the people and induced in them the habit of simulation. This awful habit has added to the ignorance and the self-deception of the administrators. Section 124A under which I am happily charged is perhaps the prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or system one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection, so long as he does not contemplate, promote, or incite to, violence. But the section under which Mr Banker and I are charged is one under which mere promotion of disaffection is a crime. I have studied some of the cases tried

Under it, and I know that some of the most loved of India's patriots have been convicted under it. I consider it a privilege, therefore, to be charged under that section. I have endeavoured to give in their briefest outline the reasons for my disaffection. I have no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King's person. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before. Holding such a belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system. And it has been a precious privilege for me to be able to write what I have in the various articles tendered in evidence against me.

In fact, I believe that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in Non-co-operation the way out of the unnatural state in which both are living. In my humble opinion, Non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as is co-operation with good. But in the past, Non-co-operation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer, I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent Non-co-operation only multiplies evil, and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for Non-co-operation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime, and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is either to resign your post and thus dissociate yourself from evil, if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil, and that in reality I am innocent; or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country and that my activity is therefore injurious to the public weal."

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SOME OPINIONS ON

SEVEN MONTHS WITH MAHATMA GANDHI, VOL. I

Richard B. Gregg:—"I read volume I of "Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi" with considerable care. My interest was fully sustained throughout,—sometimes with beautiful descriptions, sometimes with a recital of vivid dramatic events or situations, sometimes with fine brief sketches of personality, sometimes with sensitive, sympathetic and lucid explanations of the circumstances and reasons for Gandhiji's actions or words. I hope the book will be widely read, for it will tend to increased understanding of present events and currents in Indian life and to clearer thinking in the fields of politics, economics, and social reform."

Sjt. Sri Prakasa:—"It is really a delightful book and I left it hungry for the second volume."

Dr. Syed Mahmud:—"Mr. Krishnadas's book "Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi" is really an inner history of the entire non-co-operation movement. The title chosen is unfortunate. Mr. Krishnadas with his characteristic modesty has chosen a modest title for his book; but, in my opinion, no other book so far published gives so real and vivid an account of the movement which has shaken India to its very depth. Mr. Krishnadas's intimate knowledge of the persons who played leading parts in the movement makes the book very valuable and interesting. It is not merely a history of a past event, but it shows what is to come in future. The non-co-operation movement failed in its immediate objective, viz., winning of Swaraj, but it has achieved a great deal. It has roused the slumbering masses of India. It has given a moral tone to the public life of the country, and has shown us an entirely new way for the emancipation of India. Every educated Indian interested in the problem of Swaraj for India should read and digest this book."

The Jannabhumi (Edited by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya)
"When we read history we are lost in wonder at the details that are massed together,—that are gathered, collated and correlated to each other. But when we make history, we are lost in those details. The scientist that pursues research makes available his conclusions to the lay public, but the scientific world craves for the details of experiment, result and inference by which hypotheses are framed and theories are built up. So is the earnest student of politics and history. He is not satisfied with history, he craves for a knowledge of the details that have

made up chapters, and epochs of history. 'Gandhi's contribution to the emancipation of Indian from her slavery—alike political, social and cultural, constitutes not merely a chapter of modern Indian history, but an epoch thereof. Is it any wonder then that people who are earnest in their study of the developments of the present day should be anxious to know every detail of the events that led up to non-co-operation.

Krishnadas has endeavoured—and successfully, to portray these details in all their vividness,—albeit without losing the general outline which gives them shape and purpose. The seven months comprised in the present work were momentous months that witnessed the birth of the non-co-operation movement and he who peruses the pages of the book, is able to follow the genesis of the great idea. "Krishnadasa" is the nomdeplume of the assumed name by which the young Bengali author is known and addressed. He enjoyed the confidence of Gandhi and was constantly by his side chronicling the events of his varied life, and commissioned as we learn from the pages under review, to write out summaries of his speeches. We are beholden to the young writer for a lucid account of a critical period of India's history in relation to the man who was the uncrowned king of India then and is the uncrowned king of the world now in the domain of the Religion of Politics."

The Modern Review, October, 1928:—"What Mahatma Gandhi is writing of himself in *Young India* week after week can by no means be considered as the only materials with which one would build up a biography of his. The account of his examination of himself is bound to be inadequate for a biographer, for it excludes many details and minor incidents of his life which to a biographer is of essential value to paint a complete picture of his life. The book under notice portrays very nicely the daily life led by Mahatma Gandhi during the active days of the non-co-operation movement. Herein we find Mahatmaji in delight over his success some day, in extreme agonies over his failures, in the patience and endurance of a saint in the midst of overwhelming activities and in the purity and strength of a supremely spiritual mind. Mr. Krishnadas is a very keen observer and is fully aware of the possible curiosity of his readers. He leaves out no details as insignificant and paints Mahatmaji in his daily routine of life, in his habits and manners and in his friendly talks and humorous hits. This book will be of great help to a future biographer of Mahatma Gandhi. The book is so highly interesting that we have finished it with as much eagerness and pleasure as we do a good novel.

It is a history of the progress and development of the non-

co-operation movement as conducted by Mahatma Gandhi, the hero, the martyr and the saint."

The Amrita Bazar Patrika:—"The great non-co-operation movement which stirred India to its depth in the years 1920, 1921, 1922 has lost its original potency and force, and there are even some who consider it to be as dead as a door nail. But taking a total view of the thing, the awakening among the masses, and the sense of self-respect and self-dependence which has developed in the hearts of the people of this vast country, are to a large measure the contribution of this movement for which India should always be thankful to it. It is true that the spirit of inter-communal unity which contributed to the strength of that movement is no more to be found in India. The spirit of sacrifice and suffering, both among the leaders and their followers, has also greatly suffered in comparison with what it obtained during that glorious moment of the resurgence of India's soul. The idea of attaining Swaraj within a limited period has not been realised. And yet it cannot be denied that the political power as also the consciousness of power of the people of India have vastly increased since the days of non-co-operation, which has made the problem of governing India more difficult and more complicated to our present rulers. This great movement so long lacked a good history, and the writer Sjt. Krishnadas, has done a distinct service to the cause of India by recording in the book under notice the day to day activities of Mahatma Gandhi, who during the active period of non-co-operation bestrode the whole of India like a colossus. Those who desire to know the details of this great movement, and to understand it in all its aspects, would be well-advised to peruse this book.

The book is also a study of the powerful, though complex, personality of Mahatma Gandhi, whose advent in the field of Indian politics is marked by a distinct stage in the development of the Indian national movement. Those who love India should therefore make all possible attempts to understand him and his message, and we are beholden to Mr. Krishnadas for presenting before the public the personality of this great man in a manner which makes the understanding of his character appreciably easy. Although recording actual facts the book reads like a novel from beginning to end, and preserves the memory of the glorious days of non-co-operation in a very vivid and graphic manner."

The Searchlight (Patna):—"It is well-known that Sjt. Krishnadas was very closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi as his Private Secretary and personal attendant from the time the non-co-operation movement was started till Mahatmaji was sent to jail. During this period he had the unique opportunity of

studying Mahatma Ghandhi in his daily life at very close quarters, as also the inside view of the non-co-operation movement. And it appears he made the best of that golden opportunity. He observed and studied rather closely the many men, that he came in contact with and the things and events that he saw during Mahatmaji's tour in those stirring days of the rise of the non-co-operation movement, and it is these experiences of his that he narrates in such vivid detail in the book under notice. In particular, he has sought to incorporate the many minute incidents and events of Mahatma Gandhi's daily life which bring into bolder relief the complex composition of his being. It helps the reader to see through the inner workings of this supremely spiritual soul. The book as such cannot but be highly interesting and cannot but provide considerable food for thought and self-introspection. It is an exceedingly useful publication and is likely to be of very great help to the future historian and the biographer of Mahatma Gandhi, for much as it may contain, his autobiography cannot but remain incomplete so far as the study of the man in the minutest every day detail of his life is concerned. And it is indeed in the littlest things of life that true self of the man reveals itself. The book deserves to be widely read and appreciated."

প্রবাসী :—(অগ্রহায়ণ, ১৩৩৫)

“অসহযোগ আন্দোলনের নেতা ও প্রবর্তক মহাত্মা গান্ধী যখন সারা ভারতবর্ষে অসহযোগের মন্ত্র প্রচার করিয়া ভারতকে নব দীক্ষা দান করিয়া ঘুরিতেছিলেন সে-সময় যাহারা তাঁহারা সঙ্গী ও সহকর্মী ছিলেন বর্তমান লেখক তাঁহাদের একজন। গান্ধীজির ভ্রমণ-কালে সর্বদা তাঁহার সঙ্গলাভ করিবার সৌভাগ্য পাওয়ায় লেখক এই স্থিতধী প্রাজ্ঞ সাধু শিরোমণি মহাত্মার দৈনন্দিন জীবন ও কর্মশক্তির সবিশেষ পরিচয় লাভ করেন। সেই পরিচয় তিনি এই গ্রন্থে লিপিবদ্ধ করিয়াছেন। বিবরণটি “আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকায়” বহু দিন ধরিয়া প্রকাশিত হইয়াছিল। তখনই ইহা পাঠক সাধারণের চিত্ত আকর্ষণ করে। ইয়ং ইণ্ডিয়া পত্রিকায় মহাত্মা গান্ধী তাহার নিজ জীবন সম্বন্ধে যাহা লিখিতেছেন, তাহা তাহার ভবিষ্যৎ চরিত-লেখকের পক্ষে যথেষ্ট উপাদান নহে, কেননা গান্ধীজি আত্মকাহিনীতে নিজেকে সঙ্কোচে ও সংক্ষেপে প্রকাশ করিয়াছেন। আলোচ্য পুস্তকে গান্ধীজির জীবনের খুঁটিনাটি বহু ব্যাপার সন্নিবিষ্ট হওয়ায় তাঁহাকে বুঝিবার পক্ষে পুস্তকটি বিশেষ সাহায্য করে। এই পুস্তকে আমরা দেখিতে পাই—কখনও সিদ্ধিলাভে গান্ধীজি উজ্জলমুখ, কখনও অকৃতকার্যতায় স্ত্রিয়মান, কখনও সহস্র কর্ম ও উন্নত কোলাহলের মধ্যে যোগীর তায় মোন ও তপস্শ্রামণ, কখনও বা সারল্যে শিশু এবং শুচিতায় মহান্। বর্তমান ভারতের গুরু এই কর্মযোগী মহাপুরুষের জীবন অতি সুন্দর সরল ভাবে এই পুস্তকে বর্ণিত হইয়াছে। তাঁহার দৈনন্দিন অভ্যাস, হাশ্রসপূর্ণ আলাপ-আলোচনা ও আচার-ব্যবহার কিছুই ইহাতে বাদ যায় নাই। পুস্তকটি এমনই হৃদয়গ্রাহী যে, উপন্যাসের মতই ইহার পৃষ্ঠার পত্র পঠায় আগ্রহ ও আনন্দে ভাসিয়া যাইতে হয়।

পুস্তকটির ছাপা ও বাধাই সুন্দর হইয়াছে। গান্ধীজীর একখানি চিত্রও ইহাতে আছে।

আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা :—(২৪শে আশ্বিন, ১৩৩৫)।

ইতিপূর্বে আমরা মাদ্রাজের মেসার্স গনেশান কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত শ্রীযুত কৃষ্ণদাসের লিখিত “Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi” পুস্তকের সমালোচনা করিয়াছি। বর্তমান গ্রন্থখানি বাদলাভাবায় লিখিত, আলোচ্য বিষয় এক। এই বাদলা গ্রন্থই মূলগ্রন্থ। শ্রীযুত কৃষ্ণদাস প্রথমতঃ মাতৃভাষা বাদলাতেই এই নিবন্ধগুলি লিখেন, এবং সেগুলি সর্বোপাধারাবাহিকরূপে “দৈনিক আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকায়” প্রকাশিত হয়। সাহিত্যিক সৌজস্যের রীতি অনুসারে গ্রন্থের ভূমিকায় তাহা উল্লেখ করা উচিত ছিল। কিন্তু শ্রীযুত কৃষ্ণদাস তাহা করেন নাই দেখিয়া আমরা একটু দুঃখিত হইয়াছি।* সে বাহা হউক, গ্রন্থখানি সুলিখিত, পড়িতে মনোরম উপস্থানের গ্রন্থ, ৫৪০ পৃষ্ঠায় এতবড় গ্রন্থ ভাষা ও বিষয়ের ক্ষেত্রে একটান পড়িয়া ফেলা যায়।

মহাত্মা গান্ধী বর্তমান যুগের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ মানব বলিয়া স্বীকৃত। তিনি জগৎকে যে অহিংস অসহযোগ ও সত্যগ্রহের আদর্শ দেখাইয়াছেন, তাহা মানব সভ্যতার ইতিহাসে যুগান্তরের সূচনা করিয়াছে। সুতরাং এই সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ মানব কিরূপে ভারতে অসহযোগ আন্দোলন প্রবর্তন করিয়াছিলেন—তাহার মূলে কি চিন্তা, ভাব, আদর্শ বিদ্যমান ছিল, সর্বোপরি যে বিরাট চরিত্র ‘আসমুদ্র হিমাচল’ এই আন্দোলনের দ্বারা ভাব সমুদ্র

* এই বিষয়ে গ্রন্থকার জে.টি.স্বীকার করিয়া “আনন্দবাজার” ৬ই অগ্রহায়ণ, ১৩৩৫ সংখ্যায় এক পত্র প্রকাশ করিয়াছেন। গ্রন্থকার স্থায়ীরূপে একস্থানে না থাকায় এবং বহুবিধ কার্যে লিপ্ত থাকায়, এই অনিচ্ছাকৃত দোষ ঘটিয়া গিয়াছে। পুস্তকের বাদলা দ্বিতীয় খণ্ডে তাহা ঋণ কৃত হইবে।

‘মহন করিয়াছিল, তাহার স্বরূপ কি, তাহা জানিবার জন্ত সকলেরই কৌতুহল হইতে পারে। এবং মানব সভ্যতার ইতিহাস-ভাণ্ডারে তাহা সম্বন্ধে রক্ষিত হওয়াও কর্তব্য। শ্রীযুক্ত কৃষ্ণদাস বৰ্ত্তমান গ্রন্থে সেই কার্যই করিয়াছেন। তিনি ১৯২২ সালে মহাত্মাজীর গ্রেপ্তার ও কারাদণ্ডের পূর্বে কিছুকাল বরাবর মহাত্মাজীর সঙ্গে ছিলেন। তাহারই মধ্যে সাত মাসের বিবরণ তিনি এই গ্রন্থে লিপিবদ্ধ করিয়াছেন। এই সাত মাসই অসহযোগ আন্দোলনের সর্বাপেক্ষা ঘটনা বহুল অংশ। গ্রন্থকার যেভাবে মহাত্মাজীর কার্যাবলী, তাঁহার চিন্তা ও চরিত্র, দৈনন্দিন ক্ষুদ্র বৃহৎ ঘটনাবলীর মধ্য দিয়া ফুটাইয়া তুলিয়াছেন, তাহাতে তাঁহার সমধিক কৃতিত্ব প্রকাশ পাইয়াছে। বাহারা মহাত্মাজীর প্রতি অনুরক্ত ও শ্রদ্ধাসম্পন্ন, তাঁহারা তো এই গ্রন্থ পড়িবেন-ই, বাহারা তাঁহার আদর্শের সহিত ভিন্নমতাবলম্বী, তাঁহারাও ইহা পড়িয়া অসহযোগ আন্দোলনের আভ্যন্তরীণ ইতিহাস এবং তাহার নায়কের স্বরূপ বুঝিতে পারিবেন। বাঙ্গলাভাষায় এই গ্রন্থ অমূল্য সম্পদরূপে গণ্য হইবে। আমরা এরূপ পুস্তকের বহুল প্রচার ইচ্ছা করি।’
